

# FreeThought

The Largest Circulated Rationalist Monthly

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## ANNUAL SPECIAL NUMBER

### *Thought for the Month.....*

"To a reformist, reforms are everything while revolutionary work is something incidental, something just to talk about, mere eyewash. To a revolutionary, on the contrary, the main thing is revolutionary work and not reforms; to him reforms are a by-product of the revolution."

—J. V. Stalin

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**REASON THINKS: RELIGION DREAMS**

# Letters.....

## EDITORIAL ON J. P.

Sir,

I whole heartedly congratulate you for your editorial on JP in October issue of Preethought. However, I beg to differ with you when in the concluding para of the said editorial you have exhorted rationalists to record their admiration for J. P. for his rationalist leaning, because JP had long before his death departed from rationalism and was known to have reverted to the illusory belief of the existence of illusory god and supernaural power, whereof he, time and again had made public manifestation. To top it, he was reported to have resorted to worshipping some of the notoriously known godmen. Thus he has dealt a crushing blow to the scientific temper and allowed himself to the exploited by the capitalist class for perpetuating their exploitation of the people and thereby done great harm to the cause of rationalism.

Y. A. Lokhandwala, Bombay

## REVIVALISM IN AMERICA

Sir,

I have just received the August 79 issue of FREETHOUGHT. I have found it extremely interesting and useful. Especially interesting was the mention of the problem of astrology.

Unfortunately, astrology is making something of a comeback here in the United States. As recently as fifteen years ago, it was only practised by a small ignorant minority. Most Americans would have laughed at the very idea. Now it is again a controversial issue. In my opinion this is because the astrologers have learned to be "Scientific". No known fact about planetary movement is denied, they even use the positions of planets discovered in

modern times in their "calculations". It is not difficult to construct a nonsense sentence that sounds like science. Thus it is that people who have some knowledge of science are sucked into a belief in astrology. The end result is the same as even the enrichment of astrologers.

The issue of religion in the public (i. e. state financed) schools is also not dead in the United States. It is true that the outright teaching of religion is illegal and that public prayer has long been abolished. However, the teaching of evolution is still an issue. Evolution has been taught in public schools off and on for over one hundred years, but only in some localities. Until the nineteen sixties, when such laws were declared unconstitutional, many states of the United States still had anti-evolution laws. As you can see, considerable progress has been made, but there are still places, including the entire state of California, where divine creation is again taught as an "equally valid" alternative to the theory of evolution. Various "fundamentalist" Christian groups are agitating to have this introduced into the official curricula of all school districts. They make no secret of the fact that this is a first step toward the eventual elimination of the teaching of evolution.

I find it very difficult to explain the present revival of "fundamentalism" in the United States. A phoney appeal to patriotism is made, that the "founding fathers" of the USA were christian. They were in fact mainly free-thinkers but this seems insufficient explanation. I have given the question much thought. There are many persons who will retreat into supernaturalism at the slightest adversity.

I look forward with great anticipation to your next issue, and hope I have been informative.

Solomon Tajibi, New York, (U.S.A.)



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# Freethought

## TASK AHEAD

Rationalist Brothers and Sisters,

During the Year 1979 the rationalist movement in India, while gaining ground at a number of places hitherto untrodden, has been confronted on the one hand with onslaught of obscurantist forces such as R. S. S., Jamat-e-Islam and Christian Clergy which have unequivocally, jointly as well as severally, openly pledged to fight vigorously all atheist organisations, manifestations, programmes and personalities at all stages, including elections for Panchayats, State Legislative Assemblies and Lok Sabha—and, on other hand—by the fissiparous tendencies on the ascendance within the rationalist movement.

Such a grave situation demands shedding off complacency on the part of every true rationalist, nurturing the notion that he or she, himself or herself, is imbued with true atheistic rationalist knowledge and convictions and therefore has an impregnable shell around him or herself against attacks of unscientific and irrational beliefs. This is proverbially an ostrich-like attitude, which does not become of a rationalist.

The emphasis on true rationalism is imperative, as quite a few parade themselves as rationalists equating Buddha, Dayanand, and Mansur with rationalists and their cults with rationalism. This is utter fallacy and as absurd as the acts of those trying to purposefully hoodwink the people, equating their illusory religious faiths with scientific socialism. True rationalism is only atheistic rationalism and none other.

A good musician, singer or sportsman spends everyday considerable time in the

*Contd in page 349*

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## News and Notes

### ALL INDIA RATIONALIST STUDY CAMP

Mr. Avula Sambasiva Rao, former Chief Justice of the A.P. High Court inaugurated the All India Rationalist Study Camp at Andhra Vidyalaya College, Hyderabad on 1st December, 1979. He expressed the view that Religion has become a formidable instrument of oppression. He called for a close look at the role played by religion and examination of the fundamental concepts of religion. He added, "We must cultivate and sustain a rational and scientific approach to our life and problems." He appealed to the socially conscious and progressive minded persons to spread the rationalist approach and also practise what they preach.

Mr. K. Pratapa Reddy, Chairman of the Reception Committee welcomed the participants and invited frank discussion at the Camp.

Mr. Y. A. Lokhandwala, the President of the Indian Rationalist Association dealt with the history of the Rationalist Movement and referred to the four Divine Miracle Exposure Campaigns that have contributed to the growth and the organisation of the Movement under the auspices of the Association.

Mr. Damodaran of Nuclear Fuel Complex spoke on "Science and Scientific Method". Prof. J. C. B. Abraham of Madurai talked on "Evolution" and "Christianity". He said Jesus was the victim of the concept of Messiah of the Jewish tradition. Mr. Ravipudi Venkatadri, Working President of the A. P. Rationalist Association, in his erudite speech, brought out the fact that "Soul" is not to be found in Life or life processes. Mr. Dinesh Nettar gave a talk on "Universe and Quantum Mechanics" and submitted that the theories being propagated by the religious pundits that God is substantiated

by Quantum Mechanics are false. While bringing out the relationship between Astronomy and Astrology, he debunked the false claims of Astrology. Mr. P. A. Choudary portrayed the salient points of Bertrand Russell's Philosophy with reference to several anecdotes of Russell's life. Ms. S. V. Vasundhara in her lucid paper had dealt with 'Family' in the context of Rationalist thought. She outlined the tremendous waste of time, energy and money by the family members on account of religious practices. Mr. N. V. Brahmam delineated Rationalist Morality. Mr. N. Innaiiah, speaking on "Dynamics of Ideas", pleaded for an open mind. Mr. A. Suryanarayana, General Secretary of the Indian Rationalist Association warned against the Superstition and Blind Faith prevalent in the Present society.

Dr. P. M. Bhargava, Cellular Biologist of the R.R. Labs, brought out clearly the several points of contradiction between Biology and Dogma. He stated that caste has no biological foundation. He added, "the greatest danger to rationalism is from the clever effort on the part of the persons who believe in Dogma to show that whatever was said by religion was symbolic and was not opposed to science". He affirmed that the contradiction between Science and Dogma cannot be reconciled.

Mr. M. V. Ramamurthy, who also spoke on Secularism, Atheism and Humanism, officiated as the Director of Studies.

Ms. M. V. Subhamma proposed the vote of thanks.

### POPE BLESSED HIM— TO DEFEAT!

Mr. Arvind Bala Pajanor of the A.I.A. D. M. K. Party, a Christian who was Petroleum Minister in the Charan Singh Cabinet met the Pope prior to the recent elections and was blessed.

No wonder that the erstwhile minister was defeated in the elections!

## BOMBAY RATIONALIST ASSOCIATION

The Sixth Annual General Body Meeting of the Bombay Rationalist Association was held on Sunday, the 25th November 1979, at Dadar, Bombay, under the chairmanship of Mr. Y. A. Lokhandwala, the President, where at the Report and the audited accounts were unanimously passed and the following office bearers and members of the Managing Committee for the current year were unanimously elected:

### President

Mr. Abraham Solomon

### Vice-Presidents

Mr. M. A. Rane

Mr. G. Viswanathan

Mr. M. K. Samant

### Genl. Secretary

Mr. M. K. Hajeewan

### Jt. Secretaries

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V. K. Gupte,

N. S. Sitlani,

P. R. Mukundan,

G. N. More,

S. Krishnan and Y. A. Lokhandwala.

## RATIONALIST MEETING AT NELLORE

The III Rationalist Public Meeting was held on 4-11-79 which was presided over by Dr. E. Rajagopal Reddy, President of N. D. R. A.

Mr. Lavanam, Director, Atheist Centre, Vijayawada, spoke on 'Atheism—Theory and Practice'. He also answered a number of questions.

Smt. Hemalata Lavanam spoke on 'The Women and the desirable changes'.

Mr. P. Bhimanna, Secretary of the N. D. R. A. first welcomed the guests and finally proposed a vote of thanks.

The meeting was attended by more than 1200 members.

—P. Bhimanna, Nellore

## B. E. L. RATIONALIST ASSOCIATION INAUGURATED

The Inaugural Function of the B. E. L. Rationalist Association was held on 2nd December, 1979.

Mr. Beechi while inaugurating the Association emphasised the need to neglect caste and religion which discriminate between human beings. He also appealed to the people to read more Rationalist literature and to have freethinking without subjugating to the authority of scripture.

Mr. V. T. Rajsekhar Shetty, General Secretary, Karnataka Rationalist Association appreciated the steps taken to form the Association. Mr. A. M. Dharmalingam, President, Karnataka Rationalist Association presided over the function. Prof. Hypno demonstrated his hypnotic show which proved that only illusion and hallucination create 'miracles'.

Mr. C. G. Nagappa, General Secretary of the Association welcomed the gathering. Mr. R. E. Murthy, President of the Association introduced the dignitaries and office bearers. Mr. T. Nagaraj, Vice-President, proposed a vote of thanks.

—C. G. Nagappa, Bangalore.

## OUR 'HOLY' GANGES

A team of environmentalists has reported that the Ganga is unfit even for bathing in



the Banaras region and that some people using its waters are affected by skin diseases. This situation is due to the large quantity of sewerage emptied into the river near that pilgrim city on top of the contamination arising from the burning of dead bodies near Manikarnika Ghat.

### SCHOLAR URGES MUSLIMS TO BE MODERN

BEIRUT: While Ayotollah Khomeni pulls the Arab world toward Islamic fundamentalism a plucky Lebanese scholar has stunned his silent colleagues by arguing that Muslims must forego some dictates of the past and usher their great religion into the modern age.

There is nothing in the Koran that mandates stoning to death or public flogging of adulterers or chopping off the hands of thieves; interest on bank deposits is not usurious, and Muslim women can marry Christians or Jews, says Sheikh Abdullah Alayli. These punishments are the maximum recommended by the Muslim holy book and should not be summarily meted out to first, or even second offenders, he says.

The balding, bespectacled scholar has formalised his views in the first volume of a book entitled, "where lies the error? A corrigendum of misunderstanding and a renovation vantage."

Shlite Muslim followers of Khomini, like Sheikh Mohammed Fadallah of Lebanon, have condemned Alayli's work as "whimsical, devoid of any Koranic justification." Others have labelled him "marxist". Alayli clearly relishes the scholarly battle. "I am not being inventive nor am I trying to fabricate any easy solutions," said the 60 year old scholar sitting on cushions on the floor of his home here, books piled high around him. "You may call my books an attempt to rediscover a great religion."

—Times of India

### TORTURING PRISONERS

It is hard to say who are the bigger criminals in this country—the law—enforcement authorities or the law—breaking community.

The methods the police uses to extract bribe from culprits have been well-known, specially after torture was used against political prisoners during the Emergency and gruesome stories got widely publicised.

A recent case of the torture of a prisoner in Delhi's Tihar jail by a warder who was trying to extort money from him, came to light when it was brought to the notice of the highest court in the country.

The petition, on behalf of the victim, was written by Sunil Batra, an educated youngster who has been convicted in the notorious bank van robbery case and sentenced to death. In the petition, it was alleged that the prisoner, Prem Chand, was taken to the punishment cell by warder Maggar Singh who tortured him "by inserting a baton-like stick with chilli powder sprinkled on it into Prem Chand's anus upto the depth of four inches as a result of which the anus was ruptured".

The concerned justices appointed advocates as amicus curae of the Court to investigate the case. The advocates have found that the allegations are true and also that the warder Maggar Singh had been after the victim to pay Rs. 500/- to him.

The prisoner, Premchand, has been extremely lucky to have his case taken up by the Supreme Court. There are thousands of convicts in jails who are subjected to tortures by the 'mafia' consisting of jail staff and the privileged hardened criminals. None of them have any outlet to tell their sad stories. The Supreme Court judges had the grace to treat the petition as a habeas corpus. In any of the lower courts, the petition would have been lost in red tape or procedural wrangles.

In all important centres, we used to have Prisoners' Aid Societies which looked after

the welfare of prisoners and ex-prisoners. These societies appear to have become defunct. There is an urgent need to revive them wherever they existed and to establish new ones wherever they didn't.

The local Bar Associations should take the lead in the matter since their members are constantly in touch with prisoners as well as the administration and the courts.

— Courtesy — *Caravan*  
October, 1979.

\* \* \*

### THE "U — Y" CONTROVERSY — A RACIAL UNDERTONE?

Madras, Dec. 6 — The 21 year old elephant, belonging to the Varadaraja temple, Kancheepuram is dead, even as an appeal is pending in the Supreme Court over the type of Vaishnavite mark (Namam) that is to be inscribed on its body.

The controversy and the subsequent litigation over a decade, as to the type of the Vaishnavite symbol to be applied, whether Vadagalai or Thengalai, have thus been given a quietus.

Bought in the Nilambur forest at the age of about six by the trustee of the temple, Mr. R. T. Thatachari, with financial assistance from His Holiness Srimad Andavan, the elephant became a subject of controversy. As it grew, the Vadagalai sect following the then prevailing tradition affixed the Vadagalai mark. Resentment over this made the Thengalai sect take the issue to court.

Having lost the suit in lower courts, the Vadagalai representatives appealed to the Madras High Court which, pending its final disposal, struck a via media and ordered the affixation of Vadagalai and Thengalai namams in alternative weeks. As the ultimate verdict went in favour of the Thengalai sect, the matter was taken to the Supreme Court. The animal had not been behaving for the past six months and fell sick about a month ago.

*Comments:* No wonder the Elephant became sick of the Namams and the

people fighting for the type of namam to be marked on it. It is surprising that the followers of these sects have not yet become sick of their own ridiculous practices.

But the real contention between the sects has a racial undertone as Ramanuja, their common patron saint converted many non-brahmins into 'Brahmins' to augment the vaishnavite tribe! These converts forming part of the Thengalais were resented by the Vadagalais claiming superior lineage! The former's caste mark or namam resembles the English alphabet Y whereas the latter's the alphabet U.

\* \* \*

### CATHOLIC MOTHERS' PROTEST TO TERESA

Mother Teresa's views on family planning are no doubt her personal beliefs. But she is forgetting the millions of Indian mothers who are happy that there is legalised abortion today.

If we can harness Nature to serve us, and kill harmless animals to feed us, what is so wrong about getting rid of a formless cell, which would otherwise have seen a slow death brought on by poverty, starvation and disease? Bless you Mother Teresa for your wonderful works but 'No.' for your utterances on family planning which we Catholic working mothers do not share. In this twentieth century.

Mrs. Patsy Coutinho and others

— *Times of India*

\* \* \*

### PRIEST'S PERVERSE TIRADE

The Bishop of Madras on Friday appealed to the Christian electorate not to vote for any party which questioned the existence of God in the coming Lok Sabha elections.

He said all Christians would be asked to exercise their franchise without fail. Most of them had not bothered to cast their votes in the past elections.

The bishop said he would advise the Christians to support only such parties which clearly promised in their election

manifestoes that all concessions now being given to Harijans would be extended to Harijan Christians as well.

*Comment :* A few days ago a meeting of certain obscurantist Muslim leaders and venomous R.S.S. leaders was held in Bombay, wherein the same perverse tirade against Rationalists was vehemently echoed. Therefore, it is high time, that Rationalists wake up from their slumber, close up their ranks and force a united front against the onslaughts on them by the religious fanatics.

—Y. A. Lokhandwala, Bombay.

### CRASH OF THE CROSS

A heavy iron cross was blown over by a gust of wind and crashed to the ground near Pope John Paul as he celebrated mass today on his first visit to Italy's impoverished south. The Pontiff took two swift steps backward but the cross, mounted on a tripod on the podium outside the sanctuary of the Madonna of the Rosary, fell away from him.

"Thank God, the wind was blowing the other way, otherwise it might have hit the Holy Father," one priest said. The Archbishop of Naples, Cardinal Corrado Ursi, quickly lifted the cross but within a minute the wind blew it over again. This time two altar-boys picked it up and bore it away.

—Times of India.

### EYE-SIGHT OF WOMEN

A woman instantly notices all sorts of things a man doesn't. Say the cut of a skirt or a new hair style.

But, speaking seriously, there are objective differences between the eye-sight of men and women. A woman's eye preserves a visual image longer after it has been removed from her field of vision. Women can endure bright light better than men and at the same time see better in dim light, especially in the orange and red colour spectrum.

Now, if poets had known all that, they would surely have dedicated even more 'divine' poems to those 'divine' female eyes.

### A SENSATIONAL DISCOVERY

Life on earth appeared not 500,000 years ago as was formerly believed, but 1,000 million or even 2,000 million years ago. This conclusion was made by geologists who studied ancient sediments on our planet, in which they discovered traces of unknown micro-organisms in solid rock forming the original dry land. This sensational discovery was recently made in an extradeep well drilled to a depth of 9,670 metres in the north of the USSR.

### UNHOLY ALLIANCE OF 'HOLY' PEOPLE

At an inter community social get-together organised by the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh at Raja Shivali Vidyalaya, Dadar, Bombay on 25-10-79, where various community leaders spoke, the Imam of Bombay, Maulana Gulam Nadvi, urged all communities to unite for opposing atheism, which was hindering morality, truthfulness and the development of the country. If every Indian followed his own religion honestly, social imbalances would be removed, he said.

*Comment :* Birds of a feather, fly together. Muslim and Hindu obscurantists, have joined hands to oppose the Primal Truth-Atheism. The idea of an illusory god and the religious beliefs woven around it is a monstrous fraud being perpetrated on human mind for thousands of years. All true Rationalists should take up the challenge of the obscurantist forces and face it unitedly.

—Y. A. Lokhandwala, President, IRA.

### A 'MIRACLE' EXPLAINED

This is with reference to a report in your daily paper 'Christian martyr's blood liquefies.' Sir Julian Huxley the well



known biologist gives an interesting account of the miracle in his *Memoirs*. Huxley writes: "I was lucky to see the liquefaction of St. Janurius' blood, which takes place twice yearly. His church was packed, with a special enclosure preserved for the saint's 'parenti' or relatives.

The saint's coagulated blood was brought up from the crypt contained in a sealed glass tube within a splendid monstrance, and held up by the officiating priest, facing an acolyte holding a large candle. After a minute or so, he reserved the reliquary but the reddish mass stayed solid, and the priest solemnly intoned 'Non Liquesce'—the blood is not liquefying. The process was repeated several times, without liquefaction.

"The saint's relatives began to get impatient. Instead of gentle implorations: 'Dear San Gennaro, please liquefy your wonderful blood,' and the like—they became more and more peremptory, and eventually were threatening their patron, even shaking their fists. 'Liquefy your blank-blank blood, or else.....,' they were shouting; for it is very unlucky for the city and all its inhabitants if the 'miracle' fails to occur."

At last, however, the priest proclaimed the auspicious word, 'Liquesce.' The 'parenti' screamed for joy, the general congregation crossed themselves and shouted, while some respectable gentlemen went down on their knees or waved their top hats.

"The obvious explanation of the 'miracle' is that; when the substance is brought from the cool crypt and exposed to the heat of a large candle in a crowded place, it melts. But how the priest regulates the time before the liquefaction takes place we do not know, perhaps by varying the distance between the blood and the candle."

Needless to say, Huxley was as Bernard Shaw put it, 'brought up as a natural selectionist.'

—A Letter in the Times of India

### *Contd from page 343*

practice of his art to keep himself fit for the job he cherishes dear to his heart. Likewise, every rationalist should necessarily devote at least an hour every day for reading and digesting upto date rationalist literature and/or to revise whatever he has earlier read, so that he may be amply armed with scientific knowledge of his convictions and be well-groomed to boldly face any irrational arguments and situations he is confronted with. He must not be swayed merely by slogans, but be a match to meet the arguments and views advanced by believers in wrongful defence of their illusory beliefs.

Rationalist intellectuals and theorists should discard their ivory-tower attitude and condescend to effectively disseminate their learned views among as vast a section of people as possible, in a language that would disillusion them of their misbeliefs.

Every rationalist should consider himself or herself a missionary charged with the historical assignment of strenuously striving to convince as many people around him as possible of rationalist views and to bring them in the fold of rationalist organisations. He or she should always consider himself or herself a constant crusader against the unholy and unscientific attitudes, views, preachings and practices of the believers in the illusory existence of supernatural power and nonsenses woven around it.

One of the world's greatest rationalists, Marx, has aptly said that religion is the opium of the masses. The appalling carnage that the religions have created has rightly prompted John Adams, the second President of the United States to express "This would be the best of all possible worlds, if there were no religion in it".

Rationalists! Rise to the occasion and equip yourselves to fulfil the historic task of upholding the primal truth—Atheistic Rationalism.

—Y. A. Lokhandwala, Bombay.

## Readers' Forum

### ALL IRRATIONAL RADIO

Sir,

This is with particular reference to the Trichirapalli radio station conducted daily at 320.51 meters (936 khz) wave, medium band.

It is a pity that the radio, which is the outcome of a scientific invention is being widely misused. Our age old illusions continue to plague the All India Radio. A regular listener can never be reconciled with the irrationality of AIR—TRICHY, which has its own way of presenting some of the programmes.

### DEVOTIONAL PROGRAMME

The early morning programme begins with devotional programmes like 'Nerivilakkam' 'Suprabhatham' etc. 'Nerivilakkam' offers explanation of dharmic codes formed centuries ago, not analysing the correctness, reasonability and social relevance of the same.

Suprabhatham is the devotional awakening of the Lord by singing hymns. Few people listen to it. Fewer understand what those particular ups and downs sung in Sanskrit verse mean. Most people prefer to listen to our modern film songs. It is perhaps an effective and proven practice to brain-wash in the early morning hours with devotional programmes. Weak and pessimistic minds respond fully to this brainwash.

### SERVICE NEWS

In the early morning, does the word 'sevai' mean only the service to the gods? In it we hear information regarding rituals, ceremonies that would be conducted on that day at various places to very many

gods, including the repeated weddings for the same god-couple weekly, monthly or yearly. And these are called 'Sevai Seithigal' or Service News and there is a particular time allotted in AIR—Trichy for daily broadcast of this 'sevai.'

### FILM SONGS

Film songs are broadcast to entertain the listeners, but the broadcasters have their own way to inject gods even in them. It has become a usual custom with them that the first song invariably is a prayer song. The morning programme of film songs never escape this pattern. The AIR—Trichy may be dominated by the devotees of the said god but still they cannot impose their god on the other listeners—who too pay taxes for the programme.

### MOURNING PERIODS

Declaring mournings is another instance. It is irrational to carry on the mourning week long to the listeners. They impose mourning in films songs too, by broadcasting only tragic songs. What effect does it make when a song echoes failure in love and is thus woeful—just because it is the week to be remembered when a great man passed away? If the purpose is to inject tragedy in all the programmes of the week why leave news programmes? They can as well convey only tragic news all through the week of mourning. The worst part of it is that there is a plethora of bhajans, scriptural lectures and the rest during this period.

Also the AIR broadcasts many dramas, debates and discussions which seek to perpetuate many useless social ceremonies and superstitions. Radio is for the benefit of the masses. It should aim at their progress.

The tremendous potential of radio as an instrument of social change should not be lost sight of. But alas! This potential is now totally wasted.

—R. Chandrasekharan, Salem

## Who is a Rationalist?

—*M. K. Rathish*

There seems to be a lot of confusion on who a rationalist is. On what he is, and what he is not. And on what he should be. There are some who say that a rationalist should perforce be a communist. But Ingersoll and Dr. Kooror were not communists. Prof Dharmalingam is not either. At least one writer has complained that Dr. Kooror has not done the rationalist movement a favour by being silent on his attitude to communism.

But then all communists need not be rationalists. There are communists who go to Tirupathi and shave off their hair. There are communists who don black and trek to Sabarimala. E. M. S., a former Chief Minister of Kerala, a Marxist intellectual and the editor of "People's Democracy" visits palani, it said. He, it seems, has protested that he was merely accompanying his wife. But a rather difficult fare to lump, coming from an intellectual of E. M. S' calibre. It is not known whether the I. R. A. subscribes to any line of political thought. It would be better if it doesn't.

A rationalist is supposed to be one who has a scientific attitude to things. He doesn't believe in a contention unless he has verifiable evidence to support it. God

and miracles are naturally out. And he is supposed to decide on issues, not as per the promptings of his emotions, but based on what his reason tells him.

And, it is not at all necessary that all rationalists should think alike on every issue. Regimentation goes with communism, but never with rationalism. On the controversial 'Freedom of Religion bill', rationalists in Kerala were sharply divided. While some were for the bill, others were not. What was interesting was that at least one rationalist bearing a Christian name supported the bill, while most of those who opposed it vehemently had Hindu names. The most interesting opinion that was heard was that since the issue was regarding profits and losses of organised religions (a la numbers), the rationalist would do well to ignore the subject altogether.

It is not desirable that rationalists should band themselves into a monolith, tightly knit organisation. There would be elbow room for a variety of opinions, and the Association would do well to steer clear of the sordid world of politics.

There is one issue that the Association must certainly look into. In this horridly religious country, man who states that he does not believe in any religion, has to put up with a lot of inconveniences. He finds difficulty in getting admission for his children in the best schools. An Abu Abraham may not face this problem. As this country's star cartoonist and liberal thinker, he is in a glamorous class altogether. He had once written of his experience with school authorities. He had taken his daughter for 'admission' to a convent school. In the column meant for religion, he had filled in 'none'. He was

summoned by the Mother Superior. He was able to convince her that he and his wife did not profess any religion and that their child was free to choose what she wanted, or remain like them, when she grew old enough to decide. It was easy for Abu. But for ordinary mortals it may not be such a cake walk.

People 'tolerated' Nehru's Godlessness. But seem to resent it when they see it in their colleagues and relatives.

The I. R. A. should give publicity to to that section of the Constitution which gives the right to a citizen not to profess any religion, in case he is inclined that way. It should be made known whether our laws protect a citizen from harassment in case he refuses to fill the column meant for religion, in applications for jobs, in forms for 'entrance examinations' and in the numerous forms that come to him for being filled up.

If there no provisions as yet, it is time that the Association did something on that front. To borrow a cliché, the rationalists are the most harassed minority in this country. It is unfortunate that their woes and peculiar problems do not come within the purview of the Minorities Commission'.

[We thank the author for his suggestions I. R. A. had writhen to the former education minister Dr. P. C. Chunder and got an assurance that children of rationalists will not be discriminated for not professing any religion.—Ed.]

### The Chinese this—worldliness!

In the forties and fifties India and China used to harp on "the great spiritual affinity" between them. In reality there was little spiritual affinity between India and China at least for the last one thousand years. Nothing can be a greater contrast than the incurable this-worldliness of the Chinese and the incorrigible hankering after another world, in which Hindus, and, for that matter, Christians and Muslims indulge. Confucius settled the Chinese pattern once for all. When one of his disciples asked him about the other world, his reply was: "You do not know anything about this world, how can you know anything about the other world?" To another disciple who asked him whether people should serve the gods, he said: "You do not know how to serve your fellow men: how can you serve the gods?" Again when he was asked whether it was proper to offer sacrifices to the gods, he replied, "By all means do, but keep them at arm's length."

This is what the Chinese have been doing from time immemorial. They have been keeping their gods at a distance, whereas we have been allowing them to interfere in every details of our life from birth to death. That is perhaps why the Chinese have taken more avidly than the Indians to the doctrine that "religion is the opiate of the people". Confucius was debunked by Mao Tse-tung but his attitude towards life and death persisted.

K. P. S. MENON

Courtesy: The Illustrated Weekly of India

# Bharatiya Sanskriti and Non-Violence

—J. D. Bohra

A mirage has been created round the ancient Aryan culture that it is unique, it is the best, it is the greatest and that it is based on non-violence and that it is for the good of all creatures on earth.

But the facts of history tell a different story. It is neither unique, nor best, nor based on non-violence. It is like the other cultures anywhere all over the earth and has always stood for the good of ruling classes – not for the exploited class, not for the good of all creatures on earth.

Let us see the various epochs of history described by the historians of Indian history:

In the first epoch known as Satyug or the golden age, there were no classes, all men and women were equal, life was simple and natural, dominated by Mother. The food was obtained mainly by hunting wild animals. Some persons had started thinking about nature and were called rishis.

In the second and third epochs known as Treta and Dwapar, the landlords and kings had taken possession of land and father had taken control of the family. So the people and the women were almost slave-like. Every property belonged to the landlord or king. To fight and conquer

lands were supposed to be the religious duty of the ruling class – the Kshatriyas. Violence was the order of the day.

In the fourth epoch called Kaliyug, trade and commerce had developed immensely. The traders and mahajana used to make and unmake kings and often they fought violent battles killing thousands. But their main strength was in their wealth, so usually they did not fight with violent weapons but with violence hidden under the garb of non-violence because it is well known that wealth cannot be amassed except by crippling some one's commercial interests or endangering his position in society.

From the above history of India, it will be clear that there is nothing unique in the Hindu or Aryan civilization. Every country in the world has passed through the same or similar stages though at places the period of each epoch has varied.

Now observing these epochs a little minutely it will be seen that nobody ever has prohibited violence and that the diet of Indian people has been mostly non-vegetarian. People in the golden age lived by hunting and fishing. People in Treta and Dwapar epochs were also meat eaters as is seen from the following references:

King Rantidev used to slaughter cows and used to eat the meat which was also served to Brahmins. When meat was not enough, the cooks used to ask Brahmins to be satisfied with meat soup.

The rishies Parashar, Vaishampayana, Vyasa were all fish eaters. There is a story in Mahabharat of a shrotraman eating meat. Beef was served to the sage of Kalpanpad. Beef was served to Agastya at his brother's place.



Even humans were eaten and Narmedh Yagnas were performed Bhima actually killed Dushasan and drank his blood-then only he rested.

Now in Kaliyug - the story is the same.

Ayurveda describes good and bad qualities of meats of all animals. How would the author know it unless he had been eating them?

The greatest apostle of non violence the history has ever know - Shree Mahavir - is mentioned to have eaten flesh of a pigeon killed by a male cat in the house of his female devotee Revati.

Both Buddha and Mahavir - the greatest champions of non-violence in all history - were meat eaters. Buddha is known to have died after eating stale flesh of a pig. None of them has ever preached non-eating of meat. They have only preached not to kill for pleasure's sake or carelessly. So is the contention of the saint Parasnath. Once he had been out for hunting. Meanwhile the king of Kalinga had kidnaped his wife Prabhavati. Parasnath invaded his territory and brought back his wife.

All these saints had never decried violence in invasions for so called justice's sake - or in killing for procuring food.

In the holy Jain book, Uprāgsa, there is the story that the wife of a merchant used to get cow's flesh from her mother and eat it. Dharmanand Kausambi writes that there are definite instructions in the Buddha religious books that the male or female monks should not accept alms of thorny fish or bony flesh as there is very little nourishing food in them. Similar instructions are there for the monks in Dasvais-halic Sutras.

All these references show very clearly that meat eating was not prohibited at all in any religion, in our country.

But then the question arises that if religions have not prohibited meat eating, why they are placing so much emphasis on non-violence.

The fact is that the preaching of non-violence is only against the class struggle to avert it as long as possible.

In that period, with the advent of power of the merchant class, the labour class - the Shudra class - was also getting awakened and the socialist societies known as Ganrajyas were springing up all round. This had frightened the merchant class and the ruling Kshatriya class and they started preaching non-violence in thought, speech and action. And they utilised Buddha and Mahavir just as the capitalist class today utilises Gandhi in fooling people by asking them to remain non-violent in their class struggles against their exploiters.

And we know these great men well enough by now. They at times do shout at the exploiters against their frauds and cheatings but would not stop from their preachings of class collaboration and non-violence, probably because the so called great men and saints belong to the exploiting class and they would not like the defeat and total extinction of their own class. They shudder at the idea of violent class struggle which is the rule in nature for the progress of any society.

Yes, at times they talk much about 'apatigrah', non-possession of any property and renouncing it, but in practice they preach that they may amass any amount of wealth, give money to the poor and build temples for thousands of rupees and they will have all their sins wiped out. Or Gandhi may preach that they become the trustee of their amassed property but exploitation may continue.

And we see the result: the Buddhism and Jainism and Gandhism all have become the religions of the richer class of people.

From all the above facts, it will be seen that if there is any uniqueness or peculiarity in 'Bharatiya Sanskriti' on Indian Culture, it is this that it has been more successful in evading class struggle for a long time. It has nothing to do with non-violence as an ethical desideratum.

# How Vedanta Enslaved the Indian Spirit

—D. R. Narla, Hyderabad

*(The following formed part of the inaugural address by the eminent rationalist during the Twin Cities Rationalist Convention at Hyderabad a couple of years ago. —Ed.)*

I take it that you expect me to speak to you freely, frankly and forthrightly. Perhaps you want me even to be blunt. So let me say straightaway that if you want to be rationalists the very first thing you have to do is to throw your old scriptures, your old philosophies, your old social codes and the rest of the old junk. For it is primitive in its conception, irrational in its presuppositions, outrageous in its conclusions and wholly deceptive in the promises it holds out. The next thing you have to do is to turn your back once and for all on everything that diminishes man to extol God, everything that promises eternal bliss in a phantom heaven if you are meek and submissive and slavish in this real world of ours.

Now, as I am addressing an audience which consists mostly of those who are born as Hindus, I will be more specific and say that you have to reject outright what passes by the name of Vedanta. I do not

deny that it has some grains of intuitive truth, but it is, by and large, arrant nonsense meant to mislead and make them pliant tools in the hands of their masters.

Am I being too rash, almost rabid? I submit, I am not. From the time I began to think for myself, I despised the Vedanta. Apart from its other defects, none can say what exactly it is. There are umpteen schools of the Vedanta. Leave aside the minor ones and take into account only the major branches of the Vedantic thought expounded by Sankara, Ramanuja, Madhava, Vallabha, Nimbarka and Chaitanya. Do not these six speak with six different, even conflicting, voices? If we come to more modern times, is the Vedanta of Raja Rammohun Roy the same as that of Keshub Chandra Sen? Is the Vedanta of Vivekananda the same as that of Radhakrishnan? Further, is anyone of these fully consistent in the exposition of his own brand of Vedanta?

I know that the broad claim is that the Vedanta consists of quintessence of the Veda. In making this claim, people forget that, like the Talmud and the Koran, the Veda is not one book, and that, like the Bible, it is not even two books, the old and the New Testaments, it consists of four principal books and each one has, in its turn, its Brahmanas, its Aranyakas and its Upanishads. Taken together, it is a huge mass, almost a mountain, which one can rightly call the priestly literature of primitive times.

## THE VEDAS

Let us now see briefly what the principal Vedas are. They are four in number, the Rig, the Sama, the Yajur and the latest,

the Atharva, which was denied the status of a Veda for quite a long time.

Though rated very high primarily because of its antiquity, the Rig Veda is basically the scripture of a martial people, out to conquer and to kill, to pillage and to burn. And naturally their supreme God is Indra, a war lord, who drinks like a whale, wields Vajra, a terrible weapon (according to some archeologists, it was the axe with a shaft hole), and he does not hesitate to kill even pregnant women lest their progeny turn out to be a new generation of enemies to the conquering and marauding Aryans. In spite of being called a different Veda, the Sama (to quote R. C. Dutt) is 'only a selection from the Rig Veda set to music for a special purpose.' The third Veda, that is the Yajur, is in two parts, the White and the Black, and despite some minor differences in content as well as editing, both (to quote R. C. Dutt once again) consist mostly of 'the sacrificial formulas (which) are followed by dogmatic explanations and accounts of ceremonials belonging to them.' The last and the latest Veda, the Atharva, is what I might call a treatise on demonology. Please do not run away with the impression that I am taking perverse delight in being sacrilegious. Here is what no less a scholar than Radhakrishnan says of this Veda. "The religion of Atharva Veda reflects the popular belief in numberless spirits and ghosts credited with functions connected in various ways with the processes of nature and the life of man. We see in it strong evidence of the vitality of the pre-Vedic animist religion and its fusion with Vedic beliefs. All objects and creatures are either spirits or are animated by spirits. While the gods of the Rig Veda are mostly friendly ones we find in

the Atharva Veda dark and demoniacal powers which bring disease and misfortune on mankind. We have to win them by flattering petitions and magical rites. We come across spells and incantations for gaining worldly ends."

### UPANISHADIC PHILOSOPHY

I do not want to dwell on the Brahmanas and the Aranyakas, but go next to the Upanishads. You often hear of the Upanishadic Philosophy. You also hear how greatly it had influenced Emerson, Schopenhauer and other western thinkers. But what is conveniently forgotten is this: The Upanishads are many, some major, some minor, and yet others, trivial. They are written in widely distant ages by different authors. It may surprise some of you, but there is an Allahopaniṣad written in mediaeval times by an Indian Muslim. Not wishing to be outdone, an Indian Christian has recently produced a Christopaniṣad. Well, the point I am trying to drive at is that there is nothing like a unified Philosophy of the Upanishads. Further, in ethical teaching the Upanishads are shocking, for they justify every conceivable crime including the murder of one's own parents. Arthur Barriedale Keith, who has devoted almost a lifetime to the study of the Vedas and the Upanishads, says: "From the point of view of ethics the demerits of the system of the Upanishads are even more glaring than from the point of view of the intellect. It is doubtless impossible to arrive at certainty on questions of the ultimate nature of reality, but it is an easier matter to establish some principles of moral obligation, and to bring them into harmony with a scheme of the universe which if theoretical shall none the

less be at any rate plausible. The defect of the Upanishads is that they render morality in the ultimate issue valueless and meaningless. We may reasonably assume that any complete metaphysic must seek to explain as essential ingredients of existence, truth, goodness, and beauty, and we may safely conclude that a system, which, like that of the Upanishads, regards beauty and goodness as nothing but hollow mockeries, is defective and essentially unsound its theoretic basis."

Indeed, the teaching of some of the principal Upanishads is that the man who has attained Supreme Knowledge can do no wrong whatsoever.

Says the Brihadaranyaka: "(who possesses Supreme Knowledge) is not overcome by two thoughts; neither the thought 'I did wrong' nor the thought 'I did right'. Verily he commands them both. What he has done and what he has not done do not bother him".

At another place, the same Upanishads says: "If much (fuel) is laid on fire all of it burns to ashes. Just like that one (possessing knowledge of the Supreme Being) may commit evil deeds (but he) consumes all the remains clean, pure, ageless and immortal".

The Chhandogya Upanishad is in entire agreement in this matter with the Brihadaranyaka. The Kaushitaki goes even further. It declares: "He who knows (the *Atman*) by no deed of his is the world injured, not by theft, nor by killing of his own mother, nor by killing of his own father; he does not show any signs (of guilt) by change of colour on his face after he has done any evil deed".

What does all this mean? It means that, if only you can claim that you have attained Supreme knowledge; you can thief meirily and murder with impunity; you would do well to remember this before you brag again about the sublimity of Upanishadic thought.

### GITA'S INCONSISTENCY

Strictly speaking, the Bhagavad Gita is not a part of the Vedic literature. It is a late forgery tucked into that prodigious hold-all, the Mahabharata. But it is considered by many, including Tilak, Aurobindo and Gandhi, as an epitome of Hindu philosophy. But in reality the Bhagavad Gita is a hash or hodgepodge of fetishism, animism and anthropomorphism, of sankya hought and Buddhist Philosophy, of yogat and ethics, of dietetics, casteism and cosmology and of numerous other things. It can, therefore, mean different things to different men. Indeed, no two commentators have agreed about its core teaching, its central philosophy. Even S. Radhakrishnan, in spite of his ardent admiration for it, has to admit that "the Bhagavad Gita is more a religious classic than philosophical treatise". And yet we have big talk on the "Philosophy of the Gita"! D. D. Kosambi is perfectly right whea he says that "the Gita with its brilliant Sanskrit and superb inconsistency is a book that allows the reader to justify almost any action while shrugging off the consequences".

### COLEBROOKE MISINTERPRETS

So my friends, what passes by the name of Vedanta is not a systematized philosophy, much less is it a true one. It was meant, as I have suggested earlier, to mislead the masses, to hold them down

and to exploit them. Do you know who in recent times was the resurrectionist of the Vedanta? It was Henry Thomas Colebrooke. To quote from *Vedanta and the Bengal Renaissance*, a new book by Niranjana Dhar, Colebrooke had taken up service with "the East India Company's service in 1785 but his intellectual ability was much greater than his administrative capacity, and by 1800 he had already made a name as a classical Sanskrit Scholar. His posting at Gazipur near Benares, the great centre of Vedic studies, gave him a unique opportunity of getting acquainted with the Vedic literature. He built up at the library of the Fort William College a magnificent collection of Vedic manuscripts and specialised in the study of the Vedas. In 1805 Colebrooke published his 'Essay on the Vedas or Sacred Writings of the Hindus', in the *Asiatic Researches*. Here he contended that the Vedas, or rather the Vedanta, constituted the authentic tradition of India and that departures from this tradition which we now find were merely corruptions which had crept into it during the subsequent Pauranic period.

"A corollary was drawn from this assumption that the authentic tradition should serve as a model for the resurrection of India in future. The obvious implication of this theory was that revolutionary ideas foreign to this tradition should have no relevance for India. In this connection we may mention that the rich materialistic heritage of India, which was more conducive to the popular interest and aspirations, was completely disowned by Colebrooke. It was not that this heritage was unknown to him because he incidentally mentioned it and also gave an account of it in his 'Essay'. He, however, delibera-

tely underplayed its importance for glorifying the idealistic tradition of India.

"The misinterpretation of Colebrooke became reinforced with the support of another famous Indologist. This was Max Mueller known to be a great friend of India. He was so much impressed by the researches of his predecessor that he wanted to have a statue of the latter erected in England in recognition of his service to the Indian learning and British interest in India".

By establishing the Vedanta as the supreme school of Indian philosophy, Colebrooke and Max Mueller had powerfully buttressed the British imperialist interests in India, and that was handsomely acknowledged by Lord Derby, the Secretary of State for India. According to the noble Lord, "Colebrooke and Max Mueller rendered a service to the Government of India more valuable than several regiments of the army".

Vedanta is still serving as 'more valuable than several regiments of the army' to the ruling classes of the India of today.

The Field-Marshal and the Generals of that army are our mushroom Babas and Bhagavans, our gurus and other godmen. To overthrow these commanding officers and their army, we should first of all sweep on to the dust heap of history that poisonous system of thought called the Vedanta. And on that note, I will take leave of you this morning.

#### THEY NEED CATCHY SLOGANS!

The churches need all the help they can get. So one sign said: Think Metric. Observe the Ten Commandments. .. *American Rationalist*



# Celibacy and Spiritualism

—Vinayak Trajker, Gujarat.

Some days back I had a talk with a friend about celibacy. He defended as I argued against it. Then I realised how much ignorance prevails about this.

The state of not having sexual intercourse for religious purpose is called celibacy and the person practising celibacy is called celibate. Since a good long time celibacy has been regarded a way of gaining supernatural powers. In ancient India boys had to remain celibate during their schooling age. Nowadays too it is considered one of the chief characteristics of a hermit.

Celibacy was perhaps the only way to family planning in old days. At that time no other methods were introduced for family planning. And so it became popular at that time. But today many other methods have been introduced.

The 'kundalini yoga' is getting much popularity nowadays. Kundalini is said to be a gland located under navel of the shape of a serpent. Uptill now no medical man has seen such a gland even after several dissections of human bodies. The myth about this gland is very humorous. 'When it is activated by certain asanas and other kriyas, it comes via spinal cord into the eyes of yogi. Thus the yogi gets power even to fly into air'. Celibacy is also introduced here. 'Due to collection of semen, the semen, via sushumna (the spinal cord) goes to sahasrar (the brain). This is how the yogi gets extra perceptionary powers'. I do not think it necessary to comment on any of the two.

It is also argued that kundalini is an invisible gland. If it is not visible how do hermits and yogis claim to see the same in the eyes of other persons? It shall be interesting to question whether animals have any kundalini within their bodies. And as we know certain animals are forced to remain celibate throughout their lives, do their kundalinis also get activated?

It is also believed that sex is weakening. Sex is completely a natural urge, similar to the urges such as thirst and hunger. The urge for sex is exciting. And after any excitement is passed over, the individual gets weakened for a while. In other words this weakening is temporary.

Many myths about the strength of celibates are there in our religious texts. It is said that celibates stopped chariots run by two horses. I know many married sandows doing such wonders. Sandow Rammurthy is a well known hero all over the world. He would keep the elephant over his chest and used to do many other wonders. He was married with an acrobat. Wrestler Gama was married and he had powers out of belief. The only "three times world heavy weight boxing champion" Mohammad Ali has two wives. Whatever he did and does is only a matter of efforts and practice.

Celibacy is also considered as providing longevity. It may be surprising to know that Swami Vivekananda died at the age of 39 and Swami Rama Tirtha died at the age of 33. The reason could be this. Their rigidity about sex and celibacy disturbed their physical harmony. This happens in the case of any individual. Sex is absolutely a natural urge. It must be satisfied as far as possible.

## Press Barons Hold Progress to Ransom in Tamilnadu

—V. Gopalakrishnan, Madras

Tamilnadu boasts of a powerful press with wide readership. In literacy, the state ranks ahead of most Indian states. One of the State's weeklies 'Kumudam' has the largest circulation among Indian weeklies. But unfortunately the press in Tamilnadu is highly conservative unlike its counterparts in Kerala or Bengal.

### THE DAILIES :

Among the English dailies of the State is 'The Hindu' started a hundred years ago in a valiant show of anti-British exuberance by a few enterprising young men from the brahmin hamlet of Triplicane. It subsequently grew conservative and was a proud preserve of a traditionalist family. In an age of caste dominated South Indian politics it ably served the forward castes as their mouthpiece. In fact it became as much a part of them as their morning cup of coffee. Today there is a welcome and refreshing change in the Hindu, thanks to one of its Associate Editors who is a rationalist. But it still faithfully retains some of its earlier religious verve and continues to report the religious discourses from Epics and Puranas held in parts of Madras every day on its last page.

Many of the old vernacular dailies including 'Dinamani' of the Express Group

find their influence waning today. They have lost ground to the powerful chain of newspapers owned by Mr. S. B. Adithan known for spicy reporting. The rest of the Tamil dailies are mostly politically oriented, the chief among them being 'Murasoli' of the DMK.

### THE PERIODICALS AND THE BARON-IN-CHIEF :

It is however the Tamil periodicals which have struck a highly conservative chord and are blocking the path to progress of Tamilians and Tamilnadu.

The chief beneficiary at the peoples' expense is Mr. Manian, who is the most influential among the press barons of Tamilnadu today apart from Mr. Adithan. Manian has chosen to capitalise on the peoples' penchant for gossip by pouring out cinematic hotch-potch, salacious and semi-nude photos and religious stuff—a familiar combination—through his new weekly 'Idayam Pesugiradu' (Heart Speaks out). Every week he published predictions based on 'Astro-Numerology' because other magazines specialise on Astrological predictions. He also serialises temple pilgrimages, interspersed with puranic injunctions and reports miracles associated with each shrine!

### HOBNOBBING WITH 'M. G. R.' :

The balding, suave editor, Manian, is however a noted travelogue writer and novelist—some of his novels have been made into movies. He had his early training under the movie mogul of yesteryears, Mr. S. S. Vasan who owned the Gemini Studios and had started 'Ananda Vikatan'.

Mr. Manian today plays his cards intelligently. He hobnobs with the present Chief Minister of Tamilnadu, the cine actor turned politician, 'M. G. R.' and claims him as a personal friend. He had accompanied 'M. G. R.' on his recent trip abroad and the evergreen cine actor also presided over the first anniversary celebration of Manian's weekly.

In the early issues of his new magazine, the shrewd editor had praised one Panrimalai Swamigal. ('Panrimalai' means 'Pig Hill') and his fantastic 'miracles'. Manian didn't stop his disservice with such miracle-mongering. He has gone a step ahead and started a periodical 'Balajothidam' devoted wholly to astrology and connected gibberish! When Mr. Rajendren, the journalist son of 'Kalki' Krishnamurthy ventured to poke fun on this new astrological magazine, Manian couldn't stomach it! He lashed out at Mr. Rajendran through one of his journalist colleagues, 'Nakkiran'.

#### BABA'S BIOGRAPHY

Kalki, another Tamil weekly is chronically religious. The Editor Mr. K. Sadasivam was a confidant of Mr. Rajaji. No wonder this weekly fills its pages with paeans to Rajaji, the Sankaracharas and others. It serialised Rajaji's Ramayana as 'Chakravarthi Thirumagan' as also the biography of Mirabai. Even the biography of Sathya Sai Baba by one Ra. Ganapathi was published; of Kalki it can tightly be said that it is a magazine of the upper castes.

'Ananda Vikatan' one of the earliest Tamil journals was once known for its cartoons and humorous pieces. Of late it publishes short stories, brahminical family

skits by 'Marina' and temple travellogues. 'Kumudam' priced low is known for spicy short stories and cine rumours which it called 'kisu kisu' (whispers). But it too capitalises on the 'religious' and often quotes Kripanandavari, a Hindu preacher. It once gave a booklet by the preacher as to why he was a theist, as a bonus.

#### CHO'S SERIAL :

Cho Ramaswamy, the satirist-dramatist is a multifaceted personality. He had once campaigned for the Jana Sangh in New Delhi. His 'Tughlaq' in Tamil and 'Pickwick' in English proffer political stuff to the readers. A trenchant critic of Mrs. Gandhi, his recent serial 'Whither Brahmin' sought to justify many of the Hindu practices and rituals.

'Ki. Va. Ja' as the Tamil Scholar Mr. K. V. Jagannathan is known, prominently sports a tuft and caste mark and is a powerful speaker known for his pun and repartee. The short stories for which his 'Kalaimagal' is well known often stress on the woman's role as a passive obedient housewife. The prize winning novel recently serialised was of the same ilk wherein a housewife fought submissively against all odds to win back her man. Chastity is idealised. But is it to be a virtue meant only for the women folk? (Whether it is to be called a 'virtue' at all is another matter!).

#### THE WORST CULPRIT

Among the worst culprits is 'Mangai' a woman's monthly with good get up and coloured illustrations. It seeks to perpetrate the bonded woman's role in the home with features on cooking, stitching, embroidery etc. and rarely

offers any features on the modern woman and her constructive role. It also regularly featured the Junior Sankaracharya of Kanchi giving sermons, saying that a woman's proper place is in the house (where else?). She should be the embodiment of love and serve her man! The Acharys also spoke against career women which this magazine carried faithfully. Aren't there many carrier women among the readers of this monthly? And will the women followers of this Acharya prefer men gynecologists and male attendants as the Acharya decries career women?

Will it not be a national waste if our educated women choose to remain indoors, if the Acharya's call is to be heeded? (Manpower Researchers note!). This however is unlikely for economic reasons. The call of the stomach is stronger than the call of many an Acharya!

### MALAYALAM JOURNALS

One does not find this much of orthodoxy in the Malayalam journals. 'Vanitha' the Malayalam counterpart of 'Mangai' is more informative to modern woman. Even 'Mathrubhumi's' weekly edition and 'Malayala Manorama' the two popular Malayalam weeklies do not carry regular features on religious worship unlike 'Ananda Vikatan' or 'Idayam Pesugiradu' which serialise pilgrimages by their staff writers.

In spite of Guruvayur gold plating, Kaladis' wasteful Sankara memorial and the yearly trekkings by black-robed Sabar! pilgrims, Kerala readership is less gullible than that in Tamilnadu. Their high rate of literacy, and political history of pronounced leftism are perhaps the concomitants of this.

### THE ANTIDOTE

What then is the antidote for the orthodoxy of these Tamil journals? There seems to be no immediate panacea. Only by creating a strong public opinion can one move ahead in such matters.

### CATHOLIC CRUELTY

From Argentina comes the news that four Indians were killed by their own tribesmen because a Pentecostal preacher had accused them of being possessed by the devil. The recent report from Brazil that thousands of parents are forced to cast off their offspring like rubbish points an accusing finger at the Catholic Church which prohibits birth control but tolerates the dumping of young children who steal, prostitute themselves or starve.

— American Rationalist

### DO YOU BELIEVE?

Believing a thing does not make  
the thing so  
And this, my dear friend, is a thing  
you should know.  
Belief is conviction that something  
is true—  
Just one deep, dark doubt and  
the thing's not for you!

— William H. Mayfield

## Catholic Priest Under Stress

—By J. M. Menzes

"I wish your Pope stands here and watches your misery", the lady doctor said while cautioning Alphonsa Theresa against having more children. "You are already very weak, you've had five children. Next time, I won't even touch you....." Alphonsa went ahead and had two more children: the old-world-Catholic that she was, she had not even heard of natural birth-control. Two months ago, she died in labour. She was hardly 35.

Her death was interpreted as the effect of a terrible curse on the family. And the curse had been 'divinely' invoked because Alphonsa's younger brother, Tony, a Catholic priest, had quit the religious order and decided to get married. Tony was not only ostracised by his family, he was not even informed of his sister's death. When Tony married a young widow recently, his family boycotted the simple wedding ceremony.

Near Allepey in Kerala, Sister Maria Theadore, 30, suddenly found the convent life too monotonous and meaningless, and despite the vows decided to quit the convent. "It was not an easy thing to do. For weeks together I debated within myself. Suddenly all my previous convictions meant nothing to me. I had a long

talk with my Mother Superior and after great deliberation, she let me go". Maria was not welcome in her parents' home; her father swore that she was not his daughter any more. Fortunately Maria, a double-graduate, found a teaching job and now plans to get married soon.

"Marriage was not the reason for my quitting the order", she says emphatically. At least in her case, the transition was not very unpleasant. When Vilma Thankamma decided to quit the convent, her father went to the extent of starving her in a closed room for nearly a week and trying all kinds of emotional blackmail. "It was the greatest disgrace to my mother that I should have quit the nunnery. I couldn't have cared less. I was fed up with all those terrible pious cats. Anyway, I shouldn't have gone home. But there was no alternative. I had no ready job, and you know in convents we do not keep any personal savings.....".

In recent years, the number of Catholic priests and nuns who throw away their cassocks and habits and walk out of their chosen vocation are steadily increasing. In India, this is still a small problem compared to Europe and the U.S.A. where more than 60 per cent of priests have said good-bye to celibacy and community living.

"This is an era of open heart," says Albert Pinto, who quit the Society of Jesus after being a priest for more than 15 years. "And yet our parents and relatives refuse to understand us. In the olden times, many priests and nuns used to have crises of faith; many of them did indulge in occasional carnal temptations. Some priests had long, fruitful affairs particularly those who were working in villages, where



loneliness seemed to justify their lapses. But now we do not want to harbour illusions. Most of us did join religious orders in good faith, but at some time if we realise that this kind of life does not hold any meaning for us any more, should we continue and play hypocrites?"

#### FERRER AFFAIR :

Ten years ago a Spanish priest, Vincent Ferrer, the controversial organiser of cooperative farming, was asked to leave Maharashtra by the State Government. The expulsion order on Ferrer, known popularly as "The saint of Manmad", was opposed vehemently by the Christian community and hundreds of them went on a relay fast to protest against the Naik regime's decision to expel the priest. Eventually, Andhra Pradesh, under the direction of Brahmanand Reddy, himself a half Catholic, welcomed Ferrer. Four months later, the priest married his English secretary who was a couple of months pregnant. The Christian community, particularly the Catholic element, was scandalised. Overnight Ferrer became the Villain. It was not expected of a priest to impregnate any woman, let alone his secretary. And while condemning him the Catholic community not only acted as if it expected all Catholic priests (not to forget nuns) to be paragons of virtue: it also forgot that it had hailed Ferrer not because he was a celibate priest but for his humanitarian work. Agreed, he had 'sinned' against his vocation but couldn't the Catholics have waited to see if he continued to serve the community with the same zest after his marriage?

The place of celibacy in the Church has been a topic of heated controversy. Its

advocates claim that celibacy is divinely ordained, an assertion now held untenable. Some regard celibacy an apostolic institution, but historical evidence points to the contrary. Some of Christ's disciples, Apostle Peter, for instance, are known to have been married. But as the Church suffered persecution at the hands of the Roman emperors, the Church leaders thought it was better for their priests to remain celibate for the success of their faith. St. Jerome called on all priests "to cut down with the axe of virginity the wood of marriage". Though the Eastern Orthodox Church never introduced celibacy formally, the Church based in Rome considered celibacy a 'superior state'.

But more often than not, celibacy was not strictly observed. Pope Leo III died while committing adultery. Pope Alexander, VIII was not only a womaniser but also had a dozen bastard children to his credit. When Martin Luther, the German Monk, rebelled against the Church in the 16th century, he said, "it is better to marry than to burn" and he quoted Apostle Paul. Thereafter the dissident churches, broadly known as Protestant or Anglican churches, allowed their clergy to marry. But the Catholic Church refused to withdraw its fiat on celibacy.

Even today the Catholic hierarchy refuses to allow married priests and nuns, insisting that celibacy is a vital spiritual exercise. "Some priests quit the order either because they have been reading too much of Bertrand Russel and Henry Miller," says George Kurian who is about to quit because they are fed up with the working of the Church. "A few would like to stay and continue religious life if they are allowed to marry" he observes.

Not everybody waits to get the permission to quit. Says Kurian: "As soon as one asks for the permission, naturally our superiors try to brain-wash us. So some of the younger priests do not wait for the dispensation business. Of course, they can be excommunicated from Church functions, if the superiors wish to do so". Many do not wait till their training period is completed: it takes nearly ten years to train a Catholic priest and three years to complete a nun's training. In the course of religious training the person concerned is expected to complete a formal secular education, with the idea of utilising his or her service in an educational institution or in a mission hospital. "It is said that there are some people who join a religious order just to secure a good, free-of-cost degree. And then they quit" says Father William de Souza. Naturally, many Catholics dislike such people who indulge in open opportunism".

But you never know who is going to quit. Apart from Vincent Ferrer, hundreds of priest-luminaries have suddenly turned secular. John McLaughlin, a Jesuit priest who was American President Nixon's aide, gave up his priesthood when he was fifty! Once an editor an American magazine, he was a popular lecturer on sex ("Intimacy before marriage", "Intimacy outside marriage"), advocating conservative sexual standards, till he suddenly discovered the inadequacy of his ardent preaching.

Not every ex-priest and nun finds it easy to marry, though recalls Arulappa Britto, a flourishing management consultant in Bangalore: "I couldn't get a bride for two years after I quit the Jesuits. There was this attractive woman who is working

in a bank. She was quite willing but when she learnt that I was an ex-priest, she backed out. How could I tell my children that their father was an ex-priest she worried...".

The ideal thing to do in such cases is to marry an ex-nun. As an Anglo-Indian priest from a Catholic school in Madras did. He married a nun who had nursed him when he was hospitalised. That was fine. But the man, who was also a bursar of the school, also disappeared with the money that was being collected to buy a school bus.

"Such people give us a terrible name", complains ex-nun Thara, now working for a relief organisation. "Many non-Christians refuse to believe that Catholic priests and nuns lead a celibate life. The popular belief is that priests are homosexuals and nuns lesbians. And yet despite some erring clergy members, most of us struggle and manage to lead celibate lives. Then comes the crisis of vocation, soul-searching starts and the courageous ones decide to take spiritual risks, the kind of guilt feelings Catholics stand. Do you know that many priests still consider masturbation a mortal sin?"

Thara says her life now is much more fruitful. "My conscience is not troubled. I can serve God as before through social work. And I am happily free from sexual repression". But she fears many ex-clergy-men are boiling in volcanoes of guilt. "Some of them want to go back. And some, like ex-priest character in Graham Greene's novel, "The Honorary Consul" continue offering the Mass...".

## Thus Blabbered 'The Holy Mother'

—Ms. S. V. Vasundhra, Madras

*(This is with reference to a special compilation of selected answers to questions by Ms. Saradamani Devi, popularly known as 'Holy Mother', the wife of Mr. Ramakrishna (Paramahansa) to commemorate her 126th Birth Anniversary on 27-12-'79. Ms. Vasundhra's satirical comments, reveal how shallow were the thoughts, expressions and deeds of 'Holy Mother.'—Ed.).*

I used to wonder why many of the Swamis and 'Holy Mother's talk so less and prefer to allow others to worship them and talk about them. I found the answer when one day I happened to lay my hands on a small booklet 'Thus spake The Holy Mother' published by Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras. This pocket book contains hardly 150 small select quotations from 'The Holy Mother's utterances. Hence we can safely assume that these 150 utterances are the best that she pronounced during her life time. You will be surprised to learn that about half of these contradict the other half, and even otherwise they make a sad reading. I could only pity the innocent woman for her childishly absurd, unscientific and contradictory utterances. Now I agree that the less they speak, the better. I also pity those admirers of Vivekananda who try to memorize and faithfully practice whatever was said by his

guru Mr. Ramakrishna and wife Ms. Saradamani Devi.

I do have sympathy for Sarada Devi who missed all the good things in life for nothing. Thanks to Ramakrishna, she lived and died like a vegetable plant. Let's all sympathise with her but not worship her as 'Goddess.'

Here are a few selected quotations to judge the philosophy of the 'holy mother.' *(The page references relate to the 5th reprint of the book Dec. 71 and my comments are indicated in brackets).*

### 1. GOD IS LIKE VEGETABLE

Q: Mother, I have practised austerities and Japa so much, but I have not achieved anything.

A: God is not like fish or vegetables that you can buy him for a price. Page 2. *(Below is another answer contradicting the above and equating god with vegetables).*

Q: How does one get the vision of God?

A: It is only through His grace. But one must practice meditation and Japa (pages 3/4).

*(Here is a third quotation contradicting the second one).*

"Do you know, my child, what god realization is like? It is just like a candy in the hands of a child. Some people beg the child to part with it. But he does not care to give it to them. Still he easily hands it over to another whom he likes. A man performs severe austerity and spiritual practices, throughout his life to realize the god but he does not succeed,

whereas another man gets his realization practically without any effort. It depends upon the grace of god. He bestows His grace upon any one He likes " (Pages 8/9).

*(Unfortunately before she could decide whether or not god could be bought or cajoled with japa, she breathed her last).*

## 2. MISERY IS GIFT OF COMPASSIONATE GOD

"Everybody says so regretfully "there is so much misery in this world. We have prayed so much to god but still there is no end of misery. But misery is only the Gift of god. It is the symbol of His compassion " (Page 11).

*(Should we change the dictionary meaning of the word 'compassion'? The god who 'gifted' the miseries to the world and his agents calls it 'compassion' !)*

## 3. HUMAN BIRTH

"You are fortunate, as you have got this human body. Pray to the Lord as much as you can" (Page 30).

*(Then she has second thoughts on human birth):* "There is no happiness whatever in human birth. The world is verily filled with misery. Happiness here is only a name." (Page 11).

*(Once again she changes her mind).*

"My child you have been extremely fortunate in getting this human birth. Have intense devotion to god " (Page 54).

*(Some one has to do an extensive research to find out her final view on the subject !)*

## 4. BELATED AND INEFFECTIVE ACTION OF GOD

"Really and truly Sri Ramakrishna was god himself. He assumed this human body

to remove the sorrows and sufferings of others." (Page 13).

*(Can the god not remove the sorrows etc, without assuming a human body? Were there no sorrows till 19th century AD? Is there any positive proof that there are no sorrows now after Ramakrishna has come and gone? )*

## 5. 24 HOURS PER DAY MERRIMENT

"All the twenty four hours of the day were devoted to devotional music, merriment, laughter, teaching and story telling. So far as I remember I never saw him (Ramakrishna) worried for anything " (Pages 17/18).

"Take the name of the lord and contemplate on the great sufferings Sri Ramakrishna had to undergo to take upon himself the results of the bad karma of others, and then you will find that your body and mind are purified " (Pages 16/17)

*(Does she call 24 hours per day merriment as 'great sufferings' ? ).*

## 6. THE "PROTECTOR " WHO DROWNS YOU

"The Master will be your protector. You must live depending upon him. Let him do good to you, if he so desire or let him drown you if that be his will " (Pages 20/21).

*(What a great saviour to depend upon and to be drowned! )*

## 7. THE PURPOSE OF FINGERS

"God has given us fingers that they may be blessed by repeating His name with them " (Page 28).

*(Why did god give fingers to animals too?)*

## 8. 1 JUMP = 1 MILLION

"Even if you feel no attraction for the lord, you will succeed by only repeating His name. Whether you jump into water or are pushed into it, your cloth will get drenched will it not?" (Page 48).

*(She then evolves a new theory and says below that the clothes will not be drenched if you are pushed).*

"Repeating the name of God once, when the mind is controlled, is equivalent to a million repetitions when the mind stays away from God. You may repeat the name of god for the whole day, but if the mind be elsewhere, that does not produce much result. The repetition of the name must accompany concentration." (Page 45)

## 9. ILLUSORY HUSBAND AND REAL HUSBAND

"The Husband, son and the body—all are maya (illusory). These are all shackles of illusion. Unless you can free yourself from them you will not attain salvation" (Page 56).

*(But then her husband alone was not only real but "her all"! See below)*

Q: Can you call Sri Ramakrishna your father?

A: Yes. He is my father, my mother, my brother and my friend. He is my all. (Page 15).

## 10. ATTACHMENT ON PUBLIC DEMAND IS O.K.

"What is this body my child? It is nothing but three pounds of ashes (after it is burnt). Why then so much vanity about it? However big the body may be, its culmina-

tion is those three pounds of ashes only. And still people are so attached to it" (pages 55/56).

*(But she is kind enough to permit people to live if someone asks them to live. Read below).*

"When the master passed away, I also wanted to go. He appeared before me and said 'No, you must remain here. There are many things to be done' (Page 14).

*(Luckily for Saradamani Devi, her husband left many things undone against his own plans—See below).*

"The master has predetermined what he is going to accomplish" (Page 24).

## 11. THOU SHALL NOT LOVE

"If you love any human being you will have to suffer for it. She is blessed indeed, who can love only God. There is no suffering in loving God" (Page 62).

*(Perhaps by 'God' she means self!)*

## 12. THE GOD AND HIS SPIRIT

"Banaras is permeated with the spirit of God (Page 78).

"Call on the Lord who pervades the entire Universe" (Page 77).

*(The second quotation should obviously mean the "Spiritless lord" because his spirit is confined to Banaras!)*

## 13. THE SELFLESS GOD

Q: "Is it not true that God inspires man to every action?"

A: "Yes, it is true. But is man conscious of it? He thinks in his blind infatuation that he is the doer—he does not rely



on God. Whoever surrenders himself to God is saved" (Page 84).

*(Does she mean that all actions except the act of surrendering or not surrendering to God are inspired by God?)*

#### 14. PURE FOOD — PURE BLOOD

First offer to God whatever you eat. One must not eat unoffered food. As your food is, so will be your blood. From pure food you get pure blood, pure mind and strength" (Page 90).

*(Is blood cancer caused by eating food not offered to God? Don't many religious offerers also suffer from it?)*

#### 15. OPPOSITE SEXES SHOULD REPULSE EACH OTHER

"Never be intimate with any man—not even with your own father, or brother. What to speak of others then? Let me again repeat, don't be intimate with a man, even if God comes to you in that form" (Page 61).

*(As she precludes even brother / father Saradamani was aware of and possibly experienced the Freudian incest wish).*

"Do not cast your eyes even on a wooden representation of a woman or even go near it" (Page 64).

*(Saradamani is here airing Ramakrishna's misogynic views. She possibly felt herself to be Ramakrishna's alterego, more because of the devotees' blind adulation. Also if men and women keep themselves away from each other will not human race be extinct? Is that what she wants?)*

*(May be, by chance or accident she uttered a couple of sentences which do make sense).*

"Our Master did not know much of reading and writing. The real thing is to have devotion to God" (Page 23/24).

"Give up this dry discussion, this hotch-potch of philosophy. Who has been able to know God by reasoning?" (Page 67).

#### AN APOLOGY:

"I tell you one thing. If you want peace of mind, do not find fault with others. Rather see your own faults" (Page 63).

*(Obviously she herself did not bother to see her faults. As instructed by her, our Ramakrishna Math friends did not try to find fault with her utterances either. Hence this article).*

#### Adam & Eve Came from a Pigmy Chimp-Not God!

The question who was the common ancestor of Man and Chimpanzee is getting closer to an answer by scientists using genetic differences of mammals. The genes of man and horse vary as much as 20%. The common ancestor, according to Adrienne Zihlman of the University of California at Santa Cruz, seems to be the pygmy chimp Pan Paniscus.

— American Rationalist

#### LUTHER'S CRIME

Luther was guilty of two great crimes: he struck the Pope in his crown and the monks in their belly.

— Erasmus

# The Unpleasant Personality of Jesus Christ

—Colin Maine, Australia

(The following is taken from a booklet published by the Rationalist Association of New South Wales. The author is an active propagandist for the rationalist cause. Among the author's other works is a booklet 'The dead hand of Islam' .....Ed.)

Jesus holds the same position in the western world as Hitler formerly did in Germany, or Stalin did in Russia. From all sources—schools, the media and from our parents—he is represented as either a divine being or a very good and wise man.

The Jesus cult is much more worth attacking than the vague god myth. Or in trying to prove that Jesus did not exist. Even if he never lived it would be impossible to produce evidence for this, as one cannot prove a negative. But it is quite easy to show that the New Testament contradicts itself, and that the personality represented there is far from admirable.

Jesus believed in slavery, torture and everlasting punishment, and in devils, and in many other absurdities. We can produce evidence of this from the Christians' own holy book.

Rationalists and Humanists should knock this dangerous document, the New Testament, and insist that the privileges it now has should be taken away.

## THE UNPLEASANT PERSONALITY

I have just succeeded in reading through the four gospels, an exceedingly onerous task, as they must be just about the most boring and badly written books ever produced—and I could find nothing to admire about either the personality of Jesus or the ideas that he put forward.

There's not the slightest evidence that Jesus even existed. There is not one single reference to him by either the Romans or the Jews of his own time. The four gospels were written down at least 40 years after he is supposed to have lived. We don't know who wrote them. I have learned recently that it is claimed that Luke might possibly have been written by Luke himself. All that we do know is that whoever did write them must have been committed Christians. As the only accounts we have of Jesus' life were written by his own followers, it would not be at all surprising if he were to appear as an exemplary sort of person.

But even though the only records we have were written by Jesus' own followers, and anything which showed him in a bad light was destroyed when Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire, Jesus still appears far from noble.

## THE TORMENTER

Not only does he not love *his* enemies, but he wants to torture for all eternity all those who disagreed with him or refused to accept that he was the messiah, which is

about as far from 'enemy loving' as it is possible to get. In Luke 19:27 Jesus says: "But those mine enemies which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me". How very loving! Perhaps Jesus was merely setting the precedent for that hallowed Christian practice of "Don't do as I do: do as I tell you".

It is difficult to think of a more sadistic and inhuman doctrine than that of hell—endless torture. Yet it was the good old 'perfect being' himself, who thought it up. Indeed he seems quite attached to the idea. Far more so than to that of loving enemies, which he seems to mention only once. He refers to hell many times.

In the parable of Lazarus (Luke 16:19) he adds refinement to it. The damned soul, a rich man, who was apparently being tortured eternally merely to make up for the good time he had while he was alive, asks that the beggar Lazarus be allowed to just dip his finger in water and touch his tongue with it, for "I am tormented in this flame". The 'Prince of Peace' gloatingly relates that even this small mercy is to be denied to him.

The way in which Jesus is always harping on the torments awaiting those who wouldn't accept his message, must make him one of the most horribly vindictive human beings who have ever lived.

There are also dozens of other passages in which Jesus gleefully describes the torments awaiting those who dared to disagree with him. What could be more explicit than this passage (Mark 9:43-48). 'And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off; it

is better for thee to enter into life maimed than having two hands, to go into hell, into the fire that shall never be quenched; where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. If thy foot offend thee cut it off, it is better for thee to enter halt into life, than having two feet to be cast into hell, into the fire that shall never be quenched."

### PLUCK OUT YOUR EYES

There are even two references to hell in the Sermon on the Mount. One for calling one's brother "raca"; eternal torment for calling someone a bad name seems a little severe. The other is for looking lustfully at a member of the opposite sex. I don't think that many males can have much hope of possibly escaping hell, if this is taken seriously. The only men who are likely to enter heaven are homosexuals and the impotent. I will give this passage in full, as it gives quite an insight into the character of Jesus. This is taken from the Schonfield translation in modern English (Panther Paperbacks): I use this version, as the King James translation is rather vague (Mathew 5:28). It reads: "You have heard it declared 'you shall not commit adultery', but I tell you that whoever stares lustfully at a woman has already committed adultery with them in his mind. If therefore your right eye gives cause for complaint pluck it out and cast it from you. It is more advantageous for you to be disfigured than for your body intact to be cast into blazing Gehenna".

Those faint hearts who might be daunted by the prospect of travelling through life's journey without eyes will be glad to know that Jesus does have another solution to this ticklish problem of looking lustfully at

women: he advises his followers to castrate themselves. (Mathew 19:12). Alas! How many have enough belief to make even this small sacrifice? Oh ye of little faith!

### MEGALOMANIA

Another unfortunate aspect of Jesus' personality is his incredible egomania. As with the contrast between his pious pronouncements about 'love', and the gleeful way in which he describes the tortures awaiting those who dared to disagree with him, Jesus spends half his time praising the meek and humble, and the other half making egotistical statements, such as his boast that he is greater than Solomon or Jonah. (Mathew 12:41). He claims to be the "Son of God and comes out with such humble sayings as "I am the way, the truth and the life, and no man cometh to the father but by me".

To find examples of Jesus megalomania, one has only to open the New Testament or practically any page. The book of John is particularly full of them.

### INTOLERANT

Jesus is also extremely intolerant, and whenever anyone puts forward a point of view which is different to his own or is sceptical about his claims to be the messiah, he immediately flies into a rage, calls them vipers and other unpleasant names and threatens them with the tortures of hell. He also says that "there will be wailing and gnashing of teeth" when his kingdom is established. As he claimed to be the "Son of God" and said that the world was about to come to an end in the immediate future, he encounters quite an amount of disagreement, which explains why he is perpetually bad-tempered.

He insists that his interpretation of the laws of Moses is the only correct one and hurls abuse at anyone who has a different version. Even so, when they are not to his liking, he changes them, usually because they are not harsh enough for his taste. As for example when the Pharisees point out that Moses had allowed divorce. Jesus says that there shall be no divorce for any person whatever (Mark 10:6-12). Jesus doesn't seem to have had the ability to think in a logical manner, for in Mathew 19:9 he says that divorce is possible on the grounds of adultery. Perhaps his hatred of sex got the better of him on this occasion.

Many of Jesus' statements are highly intolerant, such as: "He who is not for me is against me" (Mathew 12:30), or "No man can serve two masters, for either he will hate one and love the other, or he will hold to one and despise the other." (Mathew 6:24). In John 16:9 he says that it is a sin merely not to believe in him. He also says that "No man cometh to the father but by me." He says that he wants to turn even members of the same family against each other (Mathew 10:34-36). He seems to have been extraordinarily successful in this regard and in one part of the New Testament, he even says that anyone who wants to be a follower of his "must hate their father and mother, their wife and child and indeed even themselves." (Luke 14:26).

There are so many intolerant sayings of Jesus that it would be impossible to quote them all. The whole tone of the gospel is one of fanaticism and intolerance.

Jesus is often put forward as a 'revolutionary, fighting for justice' for some incomprehensible reason. There is not a

single word in the New Testament to support this theory.

Jesus invariably takes the part of those who are in authority against those who are under them. He seemed to see nothing wrong with there being rulers on one hand, and slaves and subjects on the other. His only objection seems to have been that he wasn't a Lord or King himself. The Jewish myth of the coming messiah made it possible for him to imagine that he was the messiah-king whose arrival was expected.

### DICTATOR

In the parables he repeatedly gives examples of kings and rulers whose will has been flouted, and who punish those who have dared to disobey them. Often the punishments are quite fiendish, and are meted out for the most trivial offences. In Luke 12 : 46 Jesus gives an example of a manservant who misbehaves when his master is away, and 'began to eat and be drunken.' The parable ends: 'the master of that servant will come, in a day when he looketh not for him, and at an hour when he is not aware and will cut him in two.'

In Luke 19 : 12 Jesus gives an example of a man who went to receive a kingdom, 'but his citizens hated him, and sent a message after him, saying: we will not have this man to reign over us'. He then receives the kingdom—presumably after massacring some of his reluctant subjects—and the parable ends 'but those are my enemies who do not want that I should reign over them, bring hither and slay them before me'. In Mathew 18 : 34 he gives a parable in which a lord has one of his servants 'delivered to the tormentors', so he even approved of torture. In

Mathew 15 : 4 Jesus advocates the death penalty for cursing one's parents. In Mathew 12 : 36 he says that we will have to give account of *every idle word* in the day of judgement.

### TYRANNY

Not only does Jesus see nothing wrong with tyranny, he doesn't even consider that rulers have any obligation to act justly. The kings, and lords in his parables, act in a completely whimsical way without any sense of responsibility to their subjects. Those who ruled could do as they liked, while their subjects had no rights at all. Their only hope was to ingratiate themselves with their masters. A good example is the parable of the wedding feast (Mathest 22 : 2-13) in which a king gives a wedding feast to which he invites various people, but they all decline to come. The king then loses his temper and tells his servants 'go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find bid to the marriage'. The king then sees one of his guests without a wedding garment, which, considering the way he went about inviting him, shouldn't have surprised him, but he becomes infuriated and says: 'bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into the outer darkness. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth'. No wonder the other guests didn't come!

In the parable of the judge (Luke 18 : 5) Jesus could see nothing wrong with a judge punishing a woman merely to avoid being nagged.

Jesus saw nothing with slavery. As I. E. Levine says in his book, 'The Many Faces of Slavery', 'Christ accepted the practice



of slavery. He believed that a slave was duty bound to serve his master well".

### NEVER READ

Indeed most Christians don't even seem to be aware that these parts are there at all. The world seems to be full of people who think the Bible is the best book ever written but who have never got round to actually reading it. At least they don't seem to have the least idea as to what is actually in it.

If they were to actually take the trouble to examine the New Testament they would find out that it is the 'loving', 'forgiving' parts which are in the minority, and which are totally out of character with the rest of it. So if any part can be said to be an 'interpolation' or 'out of context' it must be the 'good bits'.

The few words of Jesus on which his reputation as a pacifist or social reformer are based, can be found in the Sermon on the Mount (Mathew 5, 6 and 7). Even here only verses 19 to 26 and 34 to 48 in chapter 5 can be really said to be in this category, and even the first of these is mixed up with threats of hell and retribution.

Of the rest of the Sermon on the Mount—supposed to be the peak of Christian teaching—practically all of chapters 6 and 7 are about religious observances.

### MESSAGE OF JESUS AN EVIL ONE

The message of Jesus is an evil one. It is a message of cruelty and hate, of fanaticism, megalomania and intolerance. All the sick ideas of the Christian religion: the idea of eternal torture, the warped attitude to sex, the worship of authority, the

intolerance for all other ways of thought—can all be directly traced to its founder. The atrocities committed in the name of the Christian religion were all inevitable, once the ideas of Jesus were taken seriously.

A man who believed in hell would be acting quite logically, indeed humanely, when he burned heretics alive—it was far better that one man should suffer for half an hour and by his agonies warn others of the fate that awaited them and so save them from an eternity of such pain. It would be a charitable act to invade other countries—much better that a few thousand... or a few million even.....die. At least a few would be saved from hell. It would be a positive duty to suppress enquiry and keep people ignorant. If hell were a possibility, any course of action would be justified.

The ghastly history of the last 2000 years in Europe—the religious wars, the witch hunts, the suppression of knowledge, the tyrannical governments, the burnings at the stake and other tortures, the fear and the guilt were all the inevitable result of such a man as Jesus being admired and of his ideas being taken seriously.

### ECONOMIC BASIS OF THE IRISH CONFLICT

The real problems in Northern Ireland are economic and social injustices in employment, housing and education. Protestants (English and Scottish settlers came in 1567) are in control of the basic power basis and are not willing to share it with others.

— American Rationalist

# Varnashrama—The Dangerous Concept

—Mukund

What is actually implied by the *varnashrama*? It is easy to explain the *varnas* as the four-fold classification of society based on division of labour, and the *ashramas* as the four stages of individual life, visualised by the ancient Indian thinkers. With this academic approach, one can write volumes on the subject. There is no dearth of material. But that effort does not enable you to get any objective insight into the concept. What is the real nature of the *Varnashrama* and what are its implications? How does it influence the Indian mind and what are its consequences on our national behaviour? The issue needs to be examined critically from the psychological and behavioural points of view.

First of all, let it be understood that the number four in this connection is immaterial. Whether the *varnas* were actually four as prescribed, and whether at any time in history the Indian society was really divided in the four groups, does not matter at all. It is a point of historical interest, not one of consequence to us today. The number has a significance, but of a psychological nature. It attaches sacredness to the theory and makes normative things look like objective ones. The numbering device was an invention of the orthodox that enabled them to impose an appearance of exactitude to something that was basically vague. Thereby, anything prescribed easily sacred. It also enabled the believers to commit things to memory without using critical acumen.

Many examples of numerological illusions could be given: one ultimately Reality, two modalities, three *gunas*, four *yugas*, five *mahabhutas*, six *vikaras*, seven *matrikas*, eight *digpalas*, nine *grahas*, ten *avatars*, *sahasra namas*, and thirty-three crores of

gods! In the light of science, these numbers have no significance. Most of them imply regimentation of mind and loss of originality. But such devices have a hold on the conformist mind that believes that the ancient Indians have discovered ultimate solutions to all problems of human life for all times to come. The *varnashrama* theory, as it would be discussed here is the bed-rock of this mentality.

## VARNAS AND CASTES

It is always argued that the *varnas* are quite different from castes. There is a point in this argument, that cannot be refuted. But it is the *varna* theory that gives religious sanction to the caste. The *varnas* are said to be divinely ordained, the Gita being its principal authority. The theory implies that the position of a person in the society basically depends upon birth, and that the duties he has to perform are accordingly obligatory. It is said to be preferable to do the duty of one's own *varna* even at the cost of death than doing the duty of another *varna* in a better way. What is said of the *varnas*, in practice applies to castes; the former exist in ideology but the latter in reality. The offerings given to God always go to the agents of God. So the *varna* theory actually gives religious support to the caste. Hence from the behavioural point of view, *varnas* and castes are only different names that represent the same ideology.

For a superficial observer the castes appear to be breaking down, because freedom of profession exists and taboos have gone down. But so far as the basic mentality is concerned the position is quite contrary. The caste is still the major factor that puts limitations on the growth of individual personalities. They create collective egos and peculiar emotional needs which the members can satisfy only within the respective castes. This mentality is unconsciously emulated by the professional groups. They also show a tendency to surrender individualities in favour of set patterns, to form their own worlds, and be

unconcerned about those who do not belong to the fold. The mentality that refuses to recognise those people as human beings, who do not fall within the chosen circle, seen everywhere to-day, is derived from caste parochialism. The sub-conscious belief in the *varna* theory is working at the back of this.

Now, what does the *varna* theory imply in actuality? It implies that the existing social order at any given time, based on whatever inequalities, is sacred and therefore cannot be radically challenged. It means that every body must find virtues in the Establishment and reconcile to one's lot without a spirit of revolt. Well, one can criticise it, and the criticism is welcome, so far as the critic is only a reformer and a revivalist. One can condemn evils in the society on the grounds that they did not exist in the Vedic times. So the *varna* theory has made us confirmed conformists.

#### EXPLOITATION-BASED SOCIAL SYSTEM

The theory upholds the existing social order. But what is that social order? The ideal of the society is quoted from the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. But that was a medieval society based on the feudal values of life. It was a society based on exploitation of woman by man, of son by the father, of younger brothers by the eldest one, of pupils by the teacher, of servants by the master, of believers by the priests and of masses by the privileged classes. Power at all levels remained in the hands of the older generation and future changes in human life were never visualised. Virtues and ideals to sustain such a society were advocated for the convenience of the privileged, and the exploited ones were made to believe that their own interest lay in reconciling with their lot which was the result of their past deeds, carried forward from their previous births. So a theory that tries to uphold such a medieval social order cannot but be dangerous. It is incompatible with the ideal of the socialistic pattern of society.

Now, as regards the *ashramas*. It may appear that there are no grounds to find fault with them at least, though you may, with the *varnas*. The four stages are well-known. *Brahmacharya* is the period of training, during *grahastya* one is to enjoy family life and after having done that enter *vanaprastha*, the period of retreat from personal interest, and finally take *sanyasa*, the stage of complete selflessness. In one sense, they imply a gradual development towards maturity, sagacity and detachment, in the individual as well as social interest. Even without any *ashrama* theory, a wise man would do the same. That the Hindu thinkers thought of all this, in those ancient days, is of course, commendable.

#### DANGERS OF ASHRAMA SYSTEM

But the *ashrama* theory has also its dangerous implications. It indicates that life is a pilgrimage, through different stages, to an eternal life. All activities are supposed to be directed to the attaining of *moksha*, the spiritual realisation. The aim of the *sanyasin* is to attain the state of spiritual freedom. "to take the sideness of the whole earth, dwell in love, and walk in righteousness". But what do all these pious words ultimately mean and how do they guide our national life?

The ideal of the *sanyasin* is eulogised beyond limits. His religious experience is declared to be of a self-certifying character. No proof is required. He is only expected to "justify his inmost convictions in a way that satisfies the thought of the age". This means what he needs is the art of controlling people at any given time. And people could be controlled only when they accept the dogmas as absolute truths and refuse to subject them to scientific tests in the light of advancing science. So the *ashrama* theory has in practice, prescribed the ideal for the highest personal ambition of becoming a self-appointed, sacred VIP, looked after by others. This means an encouragement to ignorance, hypocrisy, exploitation and self-indulgence.

(to be concluded)

## Book Review

M. N. Roy—

### India's Great Rationalist and Revolutionary

M. N. Roy was a unique and complex personality who played a revolutionary role in politics on three continents. His life was more than a fiction, an epic of sufferings, sacrifice and dedication.

To overthrow British Imperialism, through armed insurrection, Roy spent his very early life in underground revolutionary movement and as a part of it left India in search of arms during the first world war. Risking his life many a time, he travelled under different names through China, Japan and finally America, where he happened to study Marxism, and being a born rationalist he could travel beyond nationalism to communism. It is a unique incidence, that this Indian directed and participated in the Communist Revolution in Mexico, the first one after the Russian Revolution. It was a tribute to the achievement of Roy that Lenin actually entrusted him with the task of developing the Communist International. It is no wonder that Roy was the founder of the communist movement in India. Roy's thesis on national and colonial question submitted to the Communist International was a great contribution, which Lenin finally accepted inspite of his early difference with Roy.

Roy was in the vanguard of Communist Revolutionaries like Lenin, Trotsky, Stalin, Borodin, Maurice Thorez, Mao, Ho Chi Minh and the like.

Participating again in the communist movement in China and then in Germany before Hitler came to power, Roy was to come to India during the 1930 Satyagraha Movement, to give shape to the freedom struggle for social reconstruction and to transform it into a revolutionary movement for freedom of man from poverty, misery and orthodoxy. He had, however, to remain in jail for 6 years, as he was finally convicted in Meerut Conspiracy Case. During this period and thereafter, Roy, a great intellectual and an original thinker, wrote several books, which is perhaps the great and permanent contribution to human thought for salvation of human problems by rationalist, scientific and human approach.

His books "Letters from Jail", "Memoirs", "From savagery to Civilization", "Heresies of Twentieth Century", "Materialism", "Science and Superstition", and "New Humanism" reveal that he was a rationalist to the core.

The intellectual eminence of Roy is beyond dispute. He will also live as a thinker. Freedom was the one aim of his life. In search of freedom he once again travelled beyond Communism to Scientific Humanism. Developments that took place during the second world war and immediately thereafter in the political and social field and in the field of science, technology and philosophy compelled Roy to re-examine all his ideas in quest for truth. The experience of the anti-fascist war and its aftermath gave birth to new ideas and ideals to move humanity to a

new social order and Roy formulated the Philosophy of Radical Humanism, which perhaps is the essence of Roy's thought. On the present political background, it is not difficult to realise that so long as the Indian people will not cross the religious bonds beyond caste, superstition and several self imposed restrictions, and learn to respect man as man, India's millions of poor will continue to live a sub-human life perhaps for many generations. For this reason, Roys' philosophy has relevance in the present times.

(M. N. Roy—Political Biography by V. B. Karnic, Nav Jagriti Samaj, D-46, Lokmanya Nagar, Mahim, Bombay-16. Pages 656. Price Rs. 125/-).

(The book is available at I. R. A. Madras-8.....Ed.)

### SINS OF GOD

Sins of the fathers  
Visit their sons

Christ, I do not believe in  
incarnation  
But, as you had said  
you are the son of God  
(So then, God had Sinned!)  
I feel those jews  
by crucifying you  
Expiated your father's sins.

Christ—if any thing—atoned for  
God's Sins!

—Isa—

## Skylab—The Harmless Demon

[Mr. Casie Chetty as readers may be aware is the President of Sri Lanka Rationalist Association. Mr. Clarke referred to in the poem is an internationally known science fiction writer of Sri Lanka—Ed.]

'It is a demon in the sky,  
'Pray God to save us all,  
No scientist can tell us when  
Or where the scourge may fall.  
And in the august Lok Sabha,  
The aged mystic said,  
I cannot tell you what to do,  
But we will all be dead.  
Ignorant folk sold all they had,  
They feasted, sang and danced,  
For they would have their final fling  
'Ere death on them advanced.  
But we in Lanka had no qualms,  
For we had Arthur Clarke,  
"Enjoy, relax", he boldly said,  
Don't panic in the dark.  
No single human will be hurt  
By debris that may fall,  
I'll give a lakh to any one  
Who's even scratched at all.  
And now the monstor some conjured  
Has left us all intact,  
Let's give the palm to Arthur Clarke  
For fiction and for fact.

—Mervyn Casie Chetty, Sri Lanka



## IS RATIONALISM A FANCY ?

Rationalism or rationalist approach is neither a fancy born out of sporadic whim nor a hobby. It is an intellectual and scientific approach towards every facet of life, born out of conviction and not imagination.

Rationalism, therefore, is not merely an ideology, but a concept born out of knowledge of primal truth that the myth or belief of the existence of so called god and religious rituals, practices and preachings woven around it—is a monstrous fraud being perpetrated on mankind for centuries and which has corrupted and stunted the mental growth of man.

Rationalism is an attitude which does not permit taking anything for granted, unless it has been tested on the anvil of reason and found to be faultlessly true. Hence, rationalism is a burning zeal, which should not be confined to one's self, but must be allowed to spread far and wide, so as to enlighten, as many persons as possible, with the primal truth and liberate them from their mental bondage of illusory beliefs and superstitions.

This gigantic task can not be fulfilled unless every Rationalist is prepared for



sacrifice, as much as he could. The least a rationalist can sacrifice, is to donate 2% of his/her annual net income to the Indian Rationalist Association's Endowment Fund.

I am confident that every sincere Rationalist will respond to my earnest appeal immediately.

Y. A. Lokhandwala,  
President

Indian Rationalist Association.

SPACE DONATED BY A WELL WISHER

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**TAMIL NADU STATE RATIONALIST CONFERENCE**

The Rationalists and Rationalist sympathisers in Tamil Nadu will be glad to learn that the **FIRST TAMIL NADU STATE RATIONALIST CONFERENCE** will be held

at

**MADURAI**

on

**Saturday, 31st May 1980**

**Dr. NARASIMHAIAH**

(former Vice-Chancellor of Bangalore University)  
will inaugurate the conference

**Mr. Y. A. LOKHANDWALA**

(President, Indian Rationalist Association)  
will preside over the conference

Many other eminent rationalists from all over Tamil Nadu will be participating

All the Rationalists of Tamil Nadu are requested to participate at the above Conference and make it a

**Grand Success**

Delegate Fee: Rs. 5/-

Please enroll yourself as a Delegate  
by remitting the delegate fee to

**Dr. J. C. B. ABRAHAM**

Vice-Principal

American College

Madurai-635 002

or

Treasurer,

Indian Rationalist Association,

28/18, Pantheon Road

Madras-600 003

Due to Limited space and other organisational difficulties the number of delegates is proposed to be restricted to 300. Kindly enroll yourself at the earliest.

# "A moral code without religion"

By ROBERT L. PAYTON

FOR those over 30 who read books, the name Will Durant is as familiar as Shakespeare.

He is the author of the most widely read popular book on philosophy ever written, and the author of the most popular history of Western civilization ever written—even though it runs to 10 big volumes.

Will Durant will be 90 in November, and his graduate assistant, co-author and wife Durant (2 of those years is still with him. When I met them in Huntington, New York, recently, they were visiting Mrs. Durant's brother, Michael Kaufman, their home is in Los Angeles.

Between naps, Durant sits reading in a backyard rocking chair or writes more of humanity's ongoing story. Mrs. Durant, a lovely 77, doesn't nap.

Their next book, an unexpected 11th volume in "The Story of Civilization" to be called "The Age of Napoleon," will appear in November.

The story of their own lives, "A Final Autobiography" is still in process, the authors reluctant to finish their work while so much may yet happen that ought to be included.

This extraordinary couple has spent the past 47 years in the study of the Western world. Their purpose has been to survey the whole of Western civilization, with a particular emphasis on the life of the mind.

They believe that the study of history helps to understand the present and to anticipate the future. "For the present is the past rolled up for action and the past is the present unrolled for understanding."

Such epigrams dot the work of Will Durant and colour his conversation. A summary volume of his insights and fragments on history appeared in 1968, under the title of "The Lessons of History." I asked him whether things since that time would cause him to revise any of his views.

"Important things have happened since that was published, like that Watergate affair, but we had heard of corruption before."

How did Watergate measure up against the historic norms for political corruption? I asked.

"The answer is, 'perfectly normal,'" he said. "Hardly any government has ever existed, so far as I know, that didn't have some corruption. Because human beings are not born to the Ten Commandments, they have to suffer them, eventually learn to obey them as much as is necessary to stay out of jail..."

have often been challenged. Although his brilliant literary style has brought "The Story of Civilization" to an enormous audience, critics have long faulted him for his assumptions and his premises.

They are not hard to bring out. For one thing, he believes that "history is a fragment of biology."

"It's very simple," he said earnestly. "If we are of animals origin, our basic impulses had to be those an animal needed to survive. Aggressiveness, pugnacity, willingness to strike and to kill if necessary... Good, because you could never be sure when you'd eat again... All these vices that we have were virtues once, and they remain so in because we haven't had security long enough. It may take thousands of years of security to learn to collectively control those animal impulses. There they are—in our nature. We have to put up with them. We are what we had to be. We can't learn fast enough."

Perhaps history is with them, do we know we could get along if people were not aggressive and pugnacious? Maybe you have to fight wars once in a while. Maybe if the young people didn't have one acquisitiveness, nothing would get done.

"The ideas we have are an attempt to eliminate the struggle for existence from human affairs. What would be the result, biologically? Ever ask that question?"

But there is a darker side to his thoughts as well. The tone of the conversation changes when he and his wife focus on the problem of what is wrong with the world and what is needed to make it right.

The most serious problem facing us according to Will Durant is the search for a new moral basis for society, a moral regeneration of society.

Knowing that Durant had been educated as a Roman Catholic, that he had even studied for some time in the seminary and that he had left the church in his early 25s, never to return, I asked him what he thought was the moral basis for society, or if there is one.

"That's a terrible problem," he said, in a soft voice, intensely serious. "Nobody agrees with me on that one except a few philosophers. And maybe Ariel is coming around. We've had a terrific de-



Ariel and Will Durant, co-authors of the 11-volume "The Story of Civilization", sit under a tree on a summer's day. (Photo: Dick Kraus, Newday).

bate for years now on the question, is religious belief indispensable to a moral code? Will a moral code be effective with the common man if it is not reinforced by the fear of God?

"Ever since the French Revolution we've been experimenting with that idea, and Russia is experimenting with it now... It has never been tried as extensively in Russia. It is an experiment greater than communism, I think, because as far as I know in history, moral codes have been accepted by the ordinary man because he believed that the moral code had been given to him by God. The Commandments were not 'Moses said' but 'God said,' that makes quite a difference."

Later in our conversation we returned to the point. "It seems to take humanity 300 years to find a substitute for a dying religion. For example, Greek religion was dying

right about the time Christ was born. Humanity was ripe for a substitute, but it took 300 years before Constantine accepted it."

"You need a great organizer," Mrs. Durant added.

"It was very important," Durant went on, "because Constantine felt that the moral code of the people needed a new basis, a new religious stimulus."

Is the rationalist position inattainable?

"For the common man," he answered. "If you tell the common man there is no God..."

"Then what has he?" Mrs. Durant asked.

"Then he will fall to pieces morally. On the other hand, a man like me... I survive morally, because I retain the moral code that was taught me along with the religion, while I have discarded the religion. That's a very precarious position."

"The lives on the atoms, on the

small," teased Mrs. Durant, still the libertarian from her days as a student in an anarchist school where Durant was her teacher.

Durant paraphrased an anecdote of the 19th century thinkers Renan and Taine. Renan wrote to Taine about 1880: "You and I are living on a shadow. You're a decent man, and I'm a decent man. If you will, because we are operating on the Christian ethical code which was given us, infused with the Christian faith. Though we have lost the faith, we retain its shadow—which is the ethics."

"But what will happen to our children? We are living on the shadow of the lost faith, but we are not transmitting that faith to our children, alone with the ethics. We are not giving them an ethics warmed up with a religious faith. They are living on the shadow of a shadow..." (Distributed by the Los Angeles Times - Washington Post News Service).

"The lives on the atoms, on the

Big conf

Little ones



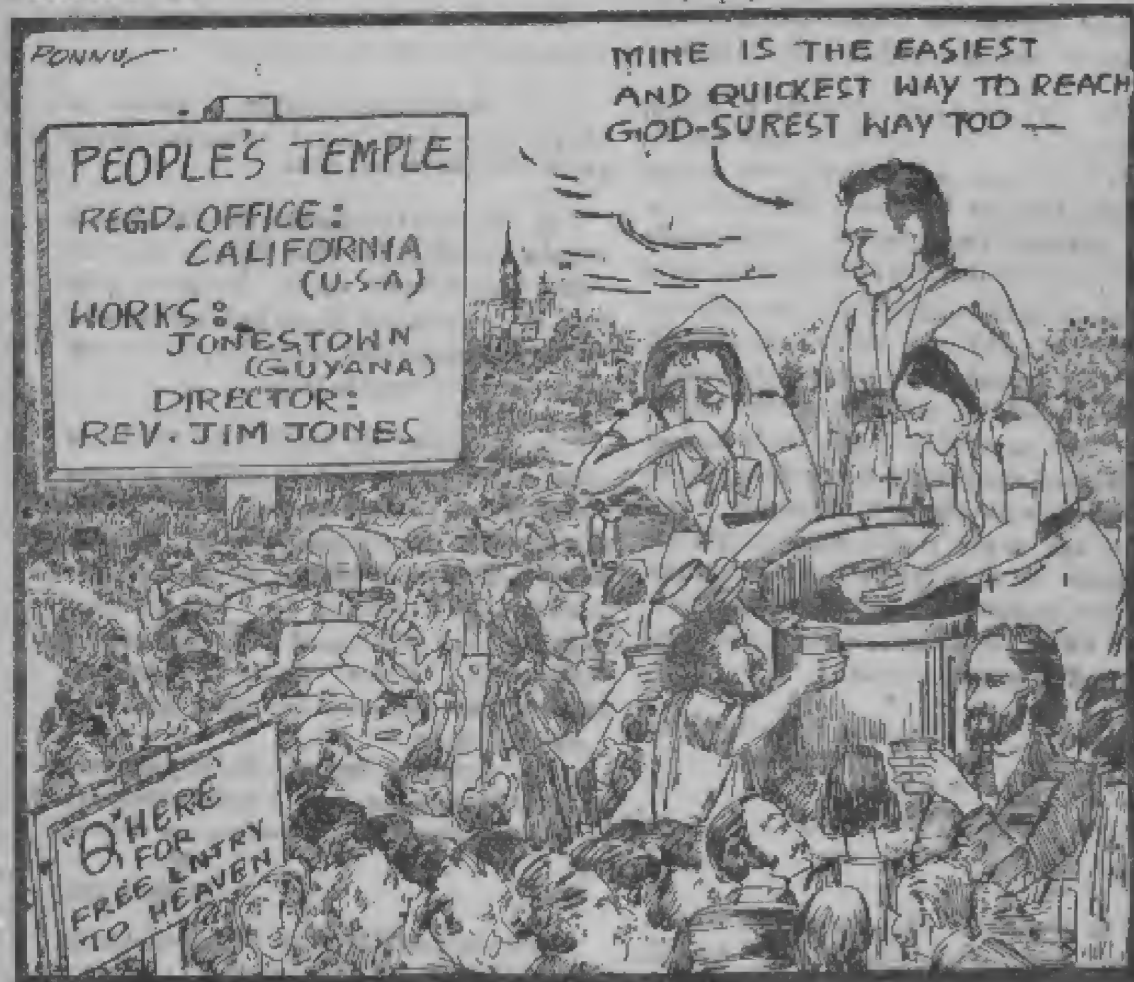
# FreeThought

The Largest Circulated Rationalist Monthly

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875 Persons committed suicide in Jones town (Report On Page 23)

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REASON THINKS: RELIGION DREAMS.



## Letters.....

### CORNER THE GODMEN

Sir,

I am a regular reader of FREE-THOUGHT and I find it interesting, educative and informative. For its further improvement I have got the following suggestion.

We may make some attempts to corner the so-called godmen, religious heads like the priests & swamis and other well known religious thinkers by means of interviews. Their answers to our questions will definitely be very vague as they are prejudiced and have no logical answer within their own religious frame-work and the limitations thereof. They lack reasoning and scientific approach, but are guided by their own beliefs handed down from generation to generation and unconditionally accepted by them without inquiring into its credibility. A rationalist interviewer can easily expose these people—the hollowness of their beliefs. Such interviews with our critical comments should be published in FREE-THOUGHT, which I think will be very effective and fruitful.

—K. P. V. Panicker  
Rourkela

\*\*\*\*\*

### FREE-THOUGHT

Sir,

The December 78 issue of the FREE-THOUGHT gives valuable reading. Articles covering hollowness of the religious texts and God men of the different parts of the country may be serialised.

—B. Banik, Berhampur  
\*\*\*\*\*

Sir,

I thank you very much for the signal service you are doing. Keep it up.

—Vinod Jain, New Delhi.  
\*\*\*\*\*

### RELIGIOUS CULTS

Sir,

I have been handed a copy of your journal FREE-THOUGHT by an Australian Freethinker

I read with interest your comments on gurus, godmen, Babas and others.

Our Association consists of relatives of people who have joined religious cults or people who have left cults.

In the past two decades there has been a massive growth in the West of cults, in particular, Indian based cults. We have a great deal of information about their activities in Western countries but would like to find out about their activities in India.

In particular we would like to know about the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (Hare Krishnas), Shree Gurusdev Ashram, Ganeshpuri (Swamy Mukthanda), the Ananda Marga, the Divine Light Mission (Guru Maharaj Ji), The Spiritual Regeneration Movement (Transcendental Meditation), Mehar Baba, Lighthouse Mission (Sri Chlamay) and other gurus who have come West.

We would be very thankful if you could put this letter in the next FREE-THOUGHT so that any one with information can write to us.

Robin Kline,

'Association Exposing Pseudo-Religious cults', Melbourne, (Australia).

(Readers who are in possession of first hand information about the above cults may please send the available information to us for onward transmission to Australia Ed.)

"Christianity does not convert the Hindus, because our Bible miracles are not so large as theirs"

Mark Twain (1835-1910)

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# Free thought

## THE YEAR AHEAD

What was 1978 like? Organisationally, we are better knit and more purposeful with an enthusiastic vanguard. We have made an impact inside the country. Our units have been active and we have won many friends, followers and sympathisers (significantly, some of them have been writers and some others women). Godmen are being criticised, if not fully exposed, by believers themselves. In spite of official patronage, religious leaders are on the defensive. Cults have received a jolt. We are receiving recognition from our international fraternity.

However, we lack the cohesion and loyalty on a political organisation. Our funds position is far from satisfactory. As rationalists we are aware that it is our duty to awaken the slumbering common man. Having liberated ourselves, we save considerable time, money and energy which a superstitious man spends on hoodos, astrology, worship and pilgrimage.

If everyone of us should decide to spend a part of this saving to spread rationalism, 'FREETHOUGHT' will not face a hand-to-mouth existence (without a single full-time paid employee!) Every rationalist should take it upon himself or herself to donate to I.R. A. a part of the fruits of rationalism. Friends, help us to improve 'FREETHOUGHT', enlarge the organisation and spread Rationalism. Contribute your time and money. You need us if you do not wish to feel lonely and we need your co-operation to provide you with new and more Rationalist companions. △

## New Year Message From President Of I. R. A.



My dear Rationalist brethren,

You are aware that we are a microscopic minority amongst the teeming millions of our brethren around, who have been enslaved for ages by illusory beliefs about the existence of a supernatural power and by myths, miracles, and superstitions generated therefrom. We are a speck in a vast ocean of people who have been subjected to stupor for thousands of years by the constant dose of fear and temptation of hell and heaven.

Yet, this tiny speck, sprung from the enlightenments of the primal truth of non-existence of the aforesaid illusory belief, has historical and moral responsibility to liberate the enslaved masses. That task, though colossal, has to be met with all our strength and resources. And therefore, I earnestly appeal to all my rationalist brothers and sisters to donate, as much as they can; to the Endowment Fund of the Indian Rationalist Association.

Those whom we are out to liberate, some time donate or spend more than their capacity for their so called religious purposes. Muslims donate at least 2½% of their income every year and likewise Christians, Hindus, Sikhs, Parsis etc all donate and spend for so called charities.

Why not, then, we, Rationalists vow now to donate at least 2% of our annual net income every year to the IRA's Endowment fund? I, on my humble part, commence with the donation of Rs. 1250/- being 5% of my annual net income for the year ended 31st December 1978 Rs. 500/- being part where of I have already donated earlier and I hope my appeal will be heeded by my rationalist brethren and each of them will also donate at least 2% of their annual net income for the year ending 31st December 1978 to the IRA's Endowment Fund, as soon as possible, and every year thereafter, so as to enable the IRA to spread its message and activities far and wide.

Yours affectionately,  
**Y. A. Lokhandwala,**  
President, I. R. A.

# Readers' Forum

## NOT BY WORDS, COMRADES.....

A friend of mine from Bombay wrote to me asking for my opinion about the write-up "Achilles' Heel of Rationalists" (Vol: VIII Aug. 78)

The Rationalist Association is not a political party. The aims and objects of the Association are boldly printed in the Articles and Memorandum of Association and there is no secret about them. Rationalists do never propagate anti marxist, anti-materialistic and anti-people ideologies. The very idea of Rationalism and Atheism is materialistic in essence and is in accordance with Marxian concepts. Of late, the Marxist Party of India has recognised this position and it has called upon its constituents and members to assist to promote Rationalism and to work with the Association wherever possible. (E. M. Sankaran Namboothiripad's clarificatory statement as published in "Chinta".)

The Rationalist Atheist Associations are never intended to replace any political thought or movement. They aim at promoting social justice in a society laden with obscurantism and superstition by removing these evils. One therefore, fails to understand why some "guys" should even talk of "battle of proletariat" in the context of Rationalism! Rationalists do sincerely desire and strive to eradicate superstition. And if the battle against superstition would succeed only as a part of the battle of the proletariat, the door is very much open to them to fight for that battle to be led from appropriate forums.

It is a travesty of truth to say that Rationalist movement in India has not been able to make any contribution in the task of transformation of the society. Those who

have deliberately plugged their senses can say that the storm of rationalist propaganda unleashed by men like EVR in Tamil Nadu, M C Joseph, the Kelappan and others in Kerala, Tukaram, Mahatma Phule and others in Maharashtra has not affected the obscurantist basement of the society in their respective areas.

Rationalist Association has a very vital role to play in India to-day. The forces of fascism and religious fanaticism are on the increase. Communal riots and atrocities against the Dalits have become the order of the day. With a Government to rule where its functionaries are always after religious heads, godmen and babas at the expense of the state, where elections are fought on communal consideration and where radio, TV and newspapers vie with each other to propagate the supremacy of religious beliefs, and faiths, India cannot dream of a secular atmosphere devoid of communal riots and inter-caste clashes. The immediate task of the Rationalist Association would be, therefore, to bring all the rationalists together for the common cause and gear up the fight against the enemies of changes and humanism.

Bangalore-27,

PEEKAY.

11-11-1978

## MARXISM AND RATIONALISM

The article in the FREETHOUGHT of August 1978 under the title "Achilles' Heel of Rationalists" by R. Lakshmi Narayanan has been highly appreciated by some of its readers. I for one, cannot share their views or agree with the points raised by the author to establish that a rationalist should definitely be a marxist, and the economic disparity in the social set up is the main cause of superstitions which prevail in the society at present.

To eradicate an evil we should strike at its root. To fight superstitions we must find out its origin and nature.

### BEGINNING OF SUPERSTITIONS :

The Cro-Magnon & Neanderthal men who lived some 25 or 30 thousand years ago were not bound by any economic or social ties. But anthropologists have sufficient proof to show that they worshipped some forms of deity and believed in a life after death. They buried their relatives near the hearth, painted the dead bodies and put food, weapons, ornaments etc., in the graves. This was believed to benefit them during their journey to the other world.

To pacify the wrath of unknown supernatural beings who are believed to be responsible for the natural calamities, early men worshipped some imaginary Gods and prayed to them. Dreaming of the dead led them to believe in a life after death.

All superstitions existing, are, in one way or the other the continuations or variations of those beliefs originated in the undeveloped brain of those primitive people. Organised religions and priesthood later exploited the common man under the pretext that they were the direct representatives of god.

It is not correct to say that superstitions grew through economic disparity in the society. If we go back to Neolithic period, when pastoral economy was prevalent in the society we can find it was quite on the reverse.

An earliest record (written 5000 years ago) give us a picture of the social and economic conditions of Sumer and Akkad. Although the land was divided into small states, people were completely interdependent and enjoyed common status.

But superstitions rites and belief in God and magic interfered with their way of living and disrupted their economic equality.

**CAPITALIST GOD:** Let us go in a little detail, to examine how their economic equilibrium was deranged by superstitions. Each of the abovementioned city states had a citadel containing many small temples of city gods. This god was the personification of magical forces and responsible not only for births and deaths, but also for vegetation. Even the germination of crops was attributed to that magic force. Hence the magic force had to be conciliated. Before history begins, society has projected its collective will, its hopes and fears into this fictitious person (god)

To look after temples there must be human servants. These men have a special right and responsibility to the deity. That was the origin of priesthood. The oldest document of Mesopotamia reveals the facts about temple revenue. The offerings to god were mainly agricultural products, such as grains, plough, animals etc. Temples functioned not only as a religious centre but also as a nucleus of capital accumulation and the priests kept an account of the wealth, gave loans to people in the form of seeds, and served the purpose of a bank also. Thus god became the biggest capitalist in the city.

Here we find that it was the belief of people in the existence of an individual god who was responsible for all fortunes and misfortunes of human beings on earth that distorted the economic equality and peaceful social life of the people.

### RATIONALISTS AND MARXISTS :

Before trying to belittle the contributions made by the veterans of rationalist movement in India, like Dr. A. T. Kooror, Mr. M. C. Joseph etc., to wipe out superstitions from the society, and blaming them for not propagating marxist ideology, Mr. Lakshminarayana could have examined the role played by marxists and the achievements they made!



this field. I don't think there is anything to their credit to point out.

The majority of Marxists in our country, especially in Kerala are staunch devotees and worshippers. Fight against superstition was never included in the election manifesto of the Marxist party. They never showed the courage to announce in public that they are against god and religion. Any party aiming at political power could never do so in a country where 99% of the people are religious. Rationalists have no political aim and therefore announce loudly and fearlessly in press and platform what they stand for.

The marxist party in India have come to power in some of our states. But they have not raised a finger against the widespread evils of superstitions in the country. On the other hand they gave full support to devotees

and pilgrims and made capital out of their ignorance. The number of marxists visiting 'Sabarimalai' in Kerala is steadily increasing every year. It is unfortunate that people like Mr. Lakshminarayanan shut their eyes to this bitter fact and advise rationalists to come into the folds of Marxism. The organisations of rationalists now consist of individuals holding different political views. But they stand united, forgetting their political differences to fight superstitions. If the rationalists heed the suggestion of Lakshminarayanan, it might create confusion and chaos among them and lead the organisation to ruin.

Let the Marxists become Rationalists first. Be faithful followers of Marx and extend their co-operation to rationalists to eradicate the evils of superstitions.

—M. K. S. Nambiar,



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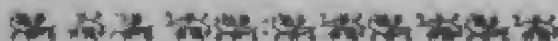
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## CHAMPION OF JUSTICE

A very different type of man was E. V. Ramaswamy but on any reasoning a remarkable figure in many ways an unlikely Indian, positive in his pride and prejudice, a born non-conformist, irreverent towards tradition by which even progressive Indians often swear, iconoclastic about social customs and religious beliefs; the progenitor in South India, of militant movement of the depressed castes; drawn powerfully once towards Gandhi but repelled by compromises with social reaction; the champion of "Justice" (not philanthropy) to suppressed people, the rebel against Hindu orthodoxy, the inspirer of "Dravida Kazhagam".

(Prof. Hiren Mukerjee-Excerpt from "Time Tested Treasure")

# NEWS AND NOTES

## FORCED CONFORMISM

Gurdaspur : November 25:

Punjab's Minister for Development, Mr. Atma Singh, said yesterday that the state Government's policy was to recruit only those Sikhs in government service who did not cut their beard or hair.

Speaking at a function at Batala, he said that those Sikh employees of the government who cut their beard and hair were liable to be removed from service.

He said the state government had full faith in the Sikh gurus and the panth and would act accordingly. Speaking to newsmen later, he said that the public relations department was being reorganised. In future only 'dadhi jathas' would be kept as singers in the department. Drama parties would only exhibit religious plays and sing religious songs. They should devote their energy to "dharam prachar."

(Courtesy: Times of India).

\* \* \* \*

## JAIL FOR 'MIRACLE MAN':

Thane Maharashtra: November 27th: A 50-year-old fakir, said to be a "miracle man" has been found guilty of causing the death of an epileptic patient in a village near Kalyan and sentenced to four years' rigorous imprisonment by the additional sessions judge, Thane.

The accused was Shaikh Daud alias Badshah Shaikh Fakir, Diwan Ali, Didar Ali Chisti Rahmtulla of Hsan district in Karnataka. The victim, Lakshman Sate of Manivili Village was an epileptic and was taken to the fakir to be cured on October 25th of last year.

According to the prosecution, the fakir poured "holy water" on the victim, chanted some mantras and started beating the patient with a stick. The beating went on into the early hours of the following day when Lakshman's brother found him to be dead. Seven others who were alleged to have helped tie up the victim were charged with abetment.

(Courtesy: Times of India)

\* \* \* \*

## A CORRECT HYPOTHESIS

Researchers of the Main Astronomical Observatory of the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences made the hypothesis that the organic compounds that are found in living organisms can be synthesized in the atmosphere around comets. Chemical analysis of comets, those flying bodies of ice, offered confirmation of this; some have proved to contain molecular compounds identical to some on Earth.

The main source of these compounds seems to be cosmic rays. As they pierce the comet's nuclei, the cosmic rays probably cause chemical reactions or compounds from simple molecules.

Courtesy : News from Soviet Union.

\* \* \* \*

## RATIONALIST ASSOCIATION OF RAMACHANDRAPURAM

Rationalist Association of Ramachandrapuram, has been formed on 12th November 1978. It appeals to all who wish the ideal of universal brotherhood based upon the

virtues of scientific outlook, freedom of thought unfettered by the authority of scriptures or persons, to join hands to create an intellectual atmosphere which will be conducive to the much needed revolution in the outlook of the people. Society needs a dynamic, flexible and progressive philosophy. There is a clear void in this field. Rationalists must build up and propagate this new scientific philosophy as the responsible intellectual leaders of the present day society.

A rationalist library has been opened at Naveen Tutorial College and lectures are arranged to educate the rationalists and the budding rationalists of the student community. A working committee has been elected consisting of Sri N. Rama Rao, Lecturer, VSM College, Sri N. Venkataiah, Principal, Naveen Tutorial College, Sri M. V. Subba Rao, Manager, Poplars Shoe Mart.

Smt Swarajyalakshmi, Botany lecturer, VSM College delivered the first lecture on "Genetics and Superstitions" on 26-11-78.

The Association is being affiliated to IRA.

\* \* \* \*

#### BHILAI SEMINAR ON RATIONALISM

The Madhya Pradesh Rationalist Association based in Bhilai, has been functioning for some years and got activated by IRA'S two Divine Miracle Exposure Campaigns during 1975. The Association has about a hundred members, and it holds monthly meetings to discuss topics on rationalism.

The Association organised a seminar at Bhilai on 22-10-78.

The subject for the seminar that was attended by about 200 invitees was "RATIONALISM AND SOCIAL RELATIONS". The obstruction that religion and caste offered to free and friendly relations between men of all levels were stressed by

the speakers, who concluded by pointing that if human relations are to be bettered and freed from restrictions and hostilities, religion must go and with it god. The constant wars and perpetual animosity between people of different religions or sects in the same religion down the ages, resulting in the death of millions of people, were evidences not only of the absence of god and his good design, but of the great harm done to humanity in the name of god and religion.

On the evening of 22nd, a public meeting was held and over a thousand people attended. The Bhilai Rationalist Association staged a drama in Malayalam entitled Deva-rude Ana (God's elephant), mimicry and the hypnotic show by Mr. P.K. Narayanan. The shows were preceded by talks on rationalism by Dr. Pande in Hindi and Prof. Dharmalingam in English.

The hypnotic performance greatly impressed the audience who were let into the secrets of the tricks employed by the god-men.

The drama 'Devarude Ana' was rationalist. The story in a way purports to depict the ills of India since independence and the illogical methods adopted to cure the disease.

The Rationalist Association in Bhilai promises to grow from strength to strength and plans are afoot to hasten the growth. It is worthy of note that the activists in the Association are full of zeal and dedication.

—Prof. A. M. Dharmalingam

\* \* \* \*

#### EIGHT IDOLS STOLEN

TIRUCHI Eight idols those of Sri. Nataraja, Amman, Murugan, Deivanai, Valli and three other Gods all of very high value to the connoisseurs of art and collectors of ancient panchaloka idols, were found missing from the Swarnapuresasar temple at Pimsalur within Mangalamedu Police limits in this district.

—The Hindu, dt. 12-11-78.

#### FOUR MORE IDOLS STOLEN

**KARAIKAL**—Panchsloka idols of Rama, Sita, Lakshman and Hanuman have been stolen from the temple near at Ananthangalam near Porayar and the Police are investigating.

—The Hindu, dt. 29-11-78

\* \* \* \*

#### T. T. D. CHAIRMAN SUSPENDED

The Andhra Pradesh High Court admitted a writ petition filed by Mr. C. Anna Rao questioning the order of the State Government suspending him from functioning as the Chairman of Tirumala-Tirupati Devasthanam.

Mr. Anna Rao, who was nominated as a trustee of the Devasthanam, was elected Chairman of the Board of Trustees on January 15, 1977. The Government, by its order made on November 4 suspended him with immediate effect and required him to submit his explanation to the charges framed against him.

—The Hindu, dt. 11-11-78.

\* \* \* \*

#### NATION MOURNS DR. KOVOOR'S DEATH

##### AT PRODDATUR

A condolence meeting was held by the local Truth Seekers Association at Proddatur under the presidentship of Mr. C. Rangappa Messrs. I. Subba Reddy, Advocate M. C. Venkata Reddy, and A. Chandra Sekhara Rao, paid tributes to the valuable services rendered by Dr. A. T. Kovoov to the Rationalist Movement.

##### AT VIJAYAWADA

On October 23 a public meeting was held in Vijayawada to pay homage to Dr. Abraham T. Kovoov. The condolence meeting was held in Hanumantharaya library hall and nearly a thousand people assembled

there to pay their respects to Kovoov for his valiant fight against superstitions and obscurantism.

The meeting was organised jointly by Atheist Centre, "Charvaka" and Indian Rationalist Association. It was presided over by Mr. Chukkappalli Pitchaiah.

Mrs. Saraswathi Gora, Messrs Y. Balaramamurthi, Dr. T. Venkateswara Rao, G. Kamaraj, T. Venkateswaralu, professor T. Venugopala Rao, T. Venkateswara Rao, Mahbob Adam, Chennupati Seshagiri Rao and other highlighted various aspects of Kovoov's life and work. They urged the youth to fight inequalities, oppression and suppressions.

##### AT ROUKELA

Immediately on hearing the sad news, our working committee has convened an extra general body meeting, and I convey to IKA and the members of the Sri Lanka Rationalist Association, the feeling of our members.

"We are really sad at the demise of Dr. A. T. Kovoov. Throughout his life Dr. Kovoov has been engaged in a relentless battle against superstitions, spiritualism and all sorts of evils associated with the religions. His death has snatched away from the rationalist scene a doyen amongst the world Rationalists. The rationalist movement has lost a tower of strength.

"It is indeed an irreparable loss. To fill up this void we must strive hard to take his teachings to many people as possible and carry forward the battle for establishing a casteless, religionless and godless Human Society, based on scientific thinking and reasoning, for which Dr. Kovoov dedicated his life".

"Let us strengthen the rationalist movement and carry forward the struggle Dr. Kovoov was arduously spearheading for the few decades!

P. K. Divakaran,  
Secretary R. R. A.

# The Vacuum Argument- Myth, Mystery, or Fact?

-D. K. Narayanan

(Contd. from last issue)

## Higher nervous activity :

There are innumerable sources of different types of stimuli in the universe, in the surrounding world. The stimuli from these sources fall on the organism throughout the course of its existence and the organism is condemned to respond to the stimuli virtually without break.

The stimuli falling on the organism are received by the sense organs from where they travel by way of nerve impulses to the brain to the particular centres in the cerebral cortex. In the cerebral cortex there it causes excitation. Excitation is the physiological basis for sensations.

Constant response to the stimuli coming from the internal as well as external environments process of excitation of the respective sensory centres in the cerebral cortex. This would result in overexertion of the nerve cells leading to loss of energy and even destruction of the nerve cells. But in a normal healthy brain such a calamitous situation would never arise, for there is a certain limit beyond which the nerve cells would not respond to stimuli but would assume a state of inactivity called inhibition which is exactly the opposite to excitation in character as well as function.

Excitation and inhibition are the basic nervous processes. They are contradictory to each other but are indivisibly connected and complementary to each other.

Dr. Pavlov wrote, "our whole life is a continuous interaction of these two processes. These processes are inseparable; they are always present not only in the nerve cell but also in each nerve fibre."

Excitation conditions the work of the sensory centres and the organs they govern while inhibition discontinues or weakens the activity of the sensory centres and the organs. It is as a result of these two processes that uninterrupted and coordinated functions of the numerous organs is ensured.

What may be called mind and mental activities, are the unending processes of nervous activities, the nature of which is explicable in terms of the processes of excitation and inhibition. But what are the principal laws underlying these processes?

I. P. Pavlov basing on the ideas of Descartes as developed by Sechenov, demonstrated that reflexes are the underlying working principle for all nervous activities. They ensure the organism's as a system exists in the surrounding world as a result of continuous equilibration of the system with the environment. The moment the equilibration becomes retarded and/or impossible, the organism becomes disorderly and its existence becomes an impossibility.

Take for example an inorganic substance like the mountainous rock in the neighbourhood. This rock is completely exposed to changing climatic conditions. In winter nights the rock gets ice-cold and in summer days it gets heated up. In short, there is no system in the rock to equilibrate its relations with the changing climatic conditions. The result is obvious: The rock gets fissures and its upper



layers get powdered and in the long long time in future, it gets reduced to soil!

But the organic world is different. An animal does not get fissures on its back, and not get powdered as a result of changing climatic extremes. The animal organism keeps almost constant temperature despite changes taking place in its surroundings. The same is the case with other stimuli whether they are magnetic or gravitational fields, light rays or sound waves, the animal organism is not condemned to be disturbed suddenly but it retains continuous equilibration with the environment, the environment from within and from without.

Reflexes are identified to be of two kinds viz. unconditioned reflexes and conditioned reflexes. Unconditioned reflexes are permanent nerve connexions formed in the lower parts of the cerebral hemispheres and are already existing at the time of birth. These permanent connections are the factors which stage-manage the mental activity or the nervous function underlying instinctive reactions of the organism.

There are instincts which are very complex in nature and function but then there are unconditioned reflexes too equally complex in every detail.

As for example, take the case of certain migratory birds. They traverse long distances leaving behind oceans and continents to reach a particular place, to lay eggs and to hatch them during a particular season. This apparently complex instinct of the migratory birds is the result of unconditioned reflex already formed in the course of the evolutionary transition to ensure the existence of the species with reference to its biological requirements against geographical and geophysical back grounds. Likewise, all the inborn habits commonly referred to as instincts can be the

working of nervous system governed by unconditioned reflexes. They are natural reactions of the organism to certain stimulating agents. Weaver birds build their nests during mating season. This act is what is generally called sexual instinct which is very much relative to the age of the organism, the state of the reproductive glands. But it can as well be explicable in terms of a complex unconditioned reflex. The intensity of the reflex depends upon the state of excitability of the reflex centres which in turn depends on the chemical and physical properties of the blood.


(to be continued)

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## Let Reason Prevail Upon Superstition

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# Auroville, the Concrete Jungle?

-Ms Sudha

"True spirituality is not to renounce life, but to make life perfect with a divine perfection" Ms. Alfassa (the so called mother) wrote, little realising that divinity, being a fancy of the imperfect man, itself will not be a perfect concept. Her pet project Auroville in Pondicherry was started with the idea of building an international city where people could work, meditate and live in an egalitarian frame work. This idealistic venture which had received blessing of the former Prime minister, Ms. Gandhi and the support of the UNESCO stands today as a shiny example and monument (alas incomplete!) to the ineffectiveness of the spirit, soul and divine guidance. It has further amply demonstrated the fact that these half baked purveyors of 'spiritualism' within the precincts of the Ashram had sought to enforce ill-conceived projects on the locals and that their own divergent views had precluded any positive achievements. Son from 124 countries was put into a lotus-shaped marble urn in a vast plot of land of over 13,000 acres near the Aurobindo Ashram in Pondicherry as part of a foundation laying ceremony for the "Universal town". It was to house 50,000 citizens seeking spiritual fulfilment. This project which commenced in

February 1968 is today, after a decade in a decaying condition showing us how under the cover of spiritual quest only a battle for power and pleasure subsists. It is mundane and not divine problems or ideologies that are at conflict at Auroville.

## TWO SOCIETIES

The Mother, Sri Aurobindo's spiritual companion founded the Sri Aurobindo Society in 1960 with Mr. Navajatha Potdar as its Chairman. Project Auroville was launched in 1964 by this Society. The aim of Auroville was that "there should be somewhere upon the earth a place no nation could claim as its sole property, a place where all could live freely as citizens of the world"

Soon after the Mother died there were bickerings and conflicts and the break away group from the Sri Aurobindo Society formed the Auroville Society. While, the former is saturated with Indians, the latter is a body of foreigners. The conflict between the two societies is at once a clash of egos, races and ideas. Mr. Potdar's men say foreigners indulge in sexual orgies and smoke pot. The foreigners say Mr. Potdar is an absentee land lord who wants to run Auroville like a 'family business'.

## PITCHED BATTLES

The two organizations have fought several street and legal battles. In April this year, 11 foreigners were arrested for 'trespassing' and obstructing the activities of the still incomplete "Bharat Niwas," since the courts recognise only the Sri Aurobindo Society as the official body. Some desperate elements in the Auroville Society have demanded independence for Auroville. "Vatican status for Auroville" read some of the slogans in Auroville. Construction is at a stand still and population has come down from 1,000 to 250.

The Mother advocated the elimination of the ego but her very followers and disciples who say that they are striving to translate her ideologies into action are now fighting because of wounded egos. The spiritual mask is torn and the ego sought to be suppressed is provoked at the slightest pretext. There can be no unity among men without a reasonable and concrete ideology enforced. 'Spirituality' with the concomitant rigours and discipline can thrive only when there is a powerful leader capable of keeping together men without questioning the concepts deeply. It was only because of this fact that the Mother could keep her followers united. After her demise there was no one to wear her mantle who could be accepted by all her followers. The project is dying a natural death.

### WASTED MONEY

The state of Auroville even after spending nearly Rs. 2.5 crores is pathetic. Progress has been so tardy that there is little to see in Auroville. Some 150 small huts, half a dozen incomplete buildings and that is all! Electrification at Auroville is so poor that it is impossible to locate the city at night. The outlook at Auroville is dim in both the literal and figurative sense. Even the memory of the great master who had experienced 'Siddhi' or that of the mother or the spiritualism propagated and accepted by the disciples have not helped in achieving their goal.

### UNDERLYING DEFECTS

Reason coupled with experience can alone bind men together to build a new project. Spiritualism lacks both reason and objective experience. Subjective fantasies termed as experience translated into sugar coated words only attract the weak minded and hence do not endure long.

Auroville was a contradiction in itself because of incompatible aims. The mother tried to give practical expression to Sri Aurobindo's vision of modern, sophisticated and self supporting community, whose members would take full advantage of scientific developments while laying greater emphasis on a more enlightened consciousness. Science, which is reason can never give room for 'enlightened consciousness'.

The mother in order to realise this impossibility expected from the potential inmates of Auroville: (a) quest for inner discovery (b) Perfect disinterestedness (c) renunciation of the proprietary sense of possession (d) work (including manual) for the development of Auroville (e) never to lie but to be concerned with self improvement (f) willingness to submit to individual and group discipline.

### THE WAY OUT

But the bare facts at Auroville force one to conclude that there is (a) no quest for inner discovery but only a quest for power (b) involvement even in trivial matters (c) fight for possession (d) laziness, alcoholism and other unwanted habits (e) cheating and furthering of one's own end (f) no willingness to submit to individual or group discipline.

As it is better late than never, at least now the Government must take over the project and strip it of its garb of spiritualism. It should also develop a co-operative form and a socio-economic study centre with a research oriented approach so that it might help in the growth of our nation instead of remaining as a colossal national waste of unfinished concrete monoliths and barren waste land.

\* \* \* \*

# I. S. Johar-The Cynic Who Should Have Been A Rationalist

- Mukund

Mr. Ajay Kumar has made an illuminating survey of the attitudes of film stars towards gods and god-men (SUNDAY-Calcutta, Sept., 3, 1978). The results are expected. In fact, that is true of other groups including scientists.

But one person in the film industry, according to the survey, has singularly proved different. He is Mr. I. S. Johar, who has independence of mind, non-conformist critical observation and courage to stand alone by his own convictions. Somehow, he claims, "I am the only sensible man in film industry—I know nobody but myself who has a good enough intellect". Though he does not bother to be serious and modest, it is not possible to dismiss this utterance as mere vanity. One has to first understand him.

First of all, Mr. Johar's analysis of film stars' mind and behaviour is superb. He says:

"Everybody in the film industry is insecure. They lack confidence in themselves. They are surprised at their own success so they have to lean on somebody who can give them the reason for their rise. They, like Indira Gandhi, start believing that it was ordained. But still they are insecure. They know that their rise

has not been proportional to their qualifications... Once they are up the ladder, they are afraid of falling down because the failures are not noticed".

Then, equally intelligent and critical in his attitude to the holy scriptures:

"To know about life, one must first reject the Bible, the Koran and the Gita—all of which I have read. These are blatherings of tribal minds, there is no novel thought in them. They are full of linkless sentences. I regard them as joke books, I read them when I want to laugh. But we respect people who are scholars of these books... And what is there in the Gita? At one stage, Krishna tells Arjuna, 'Do your duty and I will make you the greatest rishi'. And after a while he tells Arjuna, 'Do your duty and I will make you the greatest king.' The poet had forgotten what he had said earlier..."

Mr. Johar has nicely understood the god-men. He says, about them:

"They are all shopkeepers. Like the films we make, they tell the people what they want to hear. And they take care to get a big following in the West because they know that Indians are impressed by that. Rajneesh, whom I have heard, has scientifically mastered the science of speech. He is a great orator in Hindi and has a big repertoire of tales. But his discourses are contradictions. Muktananda cannot utter a cogent sentence, it is a marvel how people believe in him".

But then, come the limitations of Mr Johar. His attitude to women appears unch-

aritable. His remark reproduced below cannot be denied as a comment on the existing situation. True, that the women themselves accept the subordinate position, to the satisfaction of men. But Mr. Johar's remark appears to originate from a sub-conscious belief in the inferiority of women. He says:

"Heroines? There is a contradiction so far as the women are concerned. They always adopt the religion of the man who gives them security. But they don't make a show of their faith. Subconsciously they think that if god is lost their money would be lost. What is true of women in general is true of women in the film industry"

Moreover, even after condemning gods, godmen and scriptures, Mr. Johar talks of true religion. Here, by religion, he seems to imply ethical behaviour. Therefore, it seems that he has yet to go deeper into the nature and psychology of religion as a phenomenon in the light of modern science. He claims, "I know all that is there to know about life." But he does not seem to have understood religion with reference to illusions, delusions, hallucinations etc., and separated morality from religion.

Therefore one feels like pointing out that the philosophy of M. N. Roy, researches of Dr. Abraham Kevor and P. K. Narayanan and Prem Nath Bazaz's non-conformist analysis of Gita and its undesirable impact on Indian history, would certainly provide Mr. I. S. Johar a further scope to be at his best, than at the present light cynical level.  $\Delta$

## POSSIBILITIES OF HYPNOSIS II

### Our Hyponotist Clarifies:

First, let me touch upon the question of post-hypnotic suggestion. I again emphasize it is very useful in curing phobias, manias and habits like smoking, liquor addiction bed-wetting and nail-biting. Hypnosis can cure but cannot grow a limb afresh. But it helps to enlarge the undersized liver and breasts.

Recent studies and experiments proved that the size of breasts can be increased with the aid of hypnosis. This theory depends on two well established medical facts. Hypnosis can increase the size of blood vessel openings, resulting in greater blood flow to an organ over a period of time. The size of the organ will increase with greater blood circulation.

Then it can be put to better uses than just to extinguish candles and to make a thread suspended with a stone at one end and move like a pendulum in a circular motion just by concentrated will. I wonder why people make such tall claims. I suppose to create an image for them. Anybody can make a twine move like that simply by holding that twine in your hand. No knowledge of hypnosis is essential. Likewise a candle can be extinguished by blowing the same. why trouble hypnosis?

About the susceptibility of hypnotic suggestion, it mostly depends on his or her motivation for therapy. About 10 percent of the population is deeply hypnotisable and about 5 percent are not receptive. Any one can be hypnotised who really wants to be.

I like to conclude by saying still there are many unanswered questions about exactly how hypnosis works and for whom.

—M. K. Sabapathy.



# Whither Women?

*A Collection by Ms. Shabty*

## SAUDI WOMEN IN 'NO MAN'S LAND':

Women in Saudi Arabia are forbidden to work in any job where they might come in contact with men, the Cairo news paper "Al Gomuria" reported today, quoting a new Government decree.

Following the decree issued by the Interior Minister, Prince Nayef, all women working in Saudi Arabia and foreign firms must promptly resign. Saudi women are only permitted to be employed where there is no likelihood of them meeting males. Their occupational fields are thus limited to such areas as hospitals and schools. Neither are they allowed to drive cars.

The ban applies to foreign women as well as Saudi Arabian.

\* \* \* \*

## SEXISM IN EDUCATION

Narendra Nath Kaila Assistant Professor of Sociology at the State University College of Buffalo, New York, has published a book called *Sexism in Indian Education* after making a three-year study of 41 text books prescribed for school students in Punjab, Haryana, Delhi, U. P. and Rajasthan.

Kaila has found that the text books are highly sexist. In the 353 lessons examined, 80 per cent of all the characters are males, and they emerge as leading characters in 75 per cent of all plots.

There are 47 male but only seven female biographies. Over 100 female characters are sex role victims. The males routinely abuse and violently beat up females in various plots.

The study also reveals that the text books promote the doctrine of masculine superiority. Women who attempt to be independent are presented as more perverse or vulgar than women who passively accept male domination.

\* \* \* \*

## THEY DON'T BELIEVE IN WOMEN'S LIB

Pune: College girls have no faith in equality between men and women. They believe that women are "inferior" to men.

This view, held by over 75 per cent of college girls was brought out in a survey conducted by the Chinchwad College of Arts and Commerce here. About 400 students, including 190 girls filled in the questionnaire meant to examine their attitudes towards life.

Special attention was given to find out how they felt about sexual equality and rationalism. The reasons given by the girls for "inferior" position of women are as follows:

- 1) Women need some support from men if they are to lead a secure peaceful life.
- 2) Women are unable to discharge responsibilities even in the elementary walks of life. Many a time they are incapable of self protection and are lacking in bold decisions at critical moments in life.
- 3) Equality includes freedom along with responsibilities. But it is neither possible nor desirable for women to carry "the burden of freedom" throughout life.

4) Religion also gives a lower status to women. In certain religions even salvation of the soul is denied to women.

The survey revealed that an overwhelming majority of the boys and girls had faith in God or some ultimate force in the universe. Sixty six percent of the girls and sixty-four percent of the boys observed some kind of fast.

\* \* \* \*

### CRUSADE AGAINST DOWRY DEATHS

The anti-dowry committee of the Mahila Dakshita committee has pointed out that the numerous cases of suicide among women reported by the police were in fact "dowry deaths."

In some cases girls were pushed on to burning stoves or driven to suicide because they did not bring enough of glittering gold or household assets. The Committee has appealed to the Government to amend the prohibition of Dowry Act 1961, making it a serious offence and increasing the penalty for dowry offences. The penalty of Rs. 2,000 and six months' rigorous imprisonment was inadequate.

The greed for dowry existed among all classes, but particularly the middle-class, and there appears a greater demand for dowry in north India than in the south. △

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The Panorama of Indian Woman Hood—...1.

## The Kanya Daan

(Mr. V. Gopalakrishnan, the author is an engineer. He has several articles and poems to his credit. He is a member of IRA. Readers can look forward to his articles, poems and satirical pieces in FT.—Ed)

The word has spread with the celerity  
of a bushfire  
people astir in animated discussions  
as priestly heads confer  
the vedic chantings cease  
a febrile foreboding  
then a sudden lull

A fresh demand by the groom's people  
or a slip suddenly discovered  
creates a lacuna

She looks askance  
at the din and heat  
bedecked in bridal wear  
a mute witness  
to an iniquitous transaction  
as the crowd melts  
slowly  
and her world crumbles

With tearful eyes  
who bids farewell to a shattered dream  
whose splinters will lacerate  
and prickle her posterity in the blues  
the bride-to-be  
in a marital melody

Some one's avarice  
has prematurely ended  
the sacro-sanct of 'gifts'  
the KANYA-DAAN.

.....V. Gopalakrishnan.

# Swadesabhimani And An Earlier Baba

*-Narayana Puriya*

I am not telling a story. This happened in old Travancore in 1905. At that time Sree Moolam Thirumal Ramavarma Rajah was the king of Travancore. One day a swamy appeared in Trivandrum. His name was Sadananda Swamy. He founded his ashram in Mannakkad, near Trivandrum. This ashram was known as Brahmanistamadam. Day and night, there assembled a huge crowd of devotees and prayed for his blessings. The swamy announced that his mission was the welfare of all world.

All VIPs of that time were his disciples. Sankaran Thambi, Chief of Royal servants, High Court Vakils like P. K. Padmanabha Pillai and Muttar Govinda Pillai, a great scholar P. K. Narayana Pillai, great novelist C. V. Raman Pillai etc., etc., were in the front row.

At that time there was a magazine named 'Keralam' in Trivandrum. It was edited by Mr. K. Ramakrishna Pillai, who was known as 'Swadesabhimani' later. Editor, Ramakrishna Pillai was only 27 years old at that time, was watching carefully all the doings of this Swamy and his disciples and

devotees. He was suspicious of the claims of this swamy. He thought that it was very awkward to worship a man. He published certain articles on this. He saw that the devotees, men and women were dancing with the swamy in his ashram. 'Keralam' reported this as "some monkey's deeds". The devotees, who were VIPs and higher officials could not appreciate this criticism. The blind Bhaktas could not bear his heresy.

But Ramakrishna Pillai did not stop his fight against this kind of superstition. He collected detailed history of this swamy Sadananda. Before disclosing this, he wanted to hear the explanations from the swamy. So he deputed one of his assistants to the ashram for an interview with the swamy. He presented 100 questions to the swamy and asked him to answer them. The Swamy promised he would answer them within a week and requested the press reporter to come next week. But when he came next week for the answer the Swamy declared that asking such questions to a godman like him was improper and he would not answer them. Then Ramakrishna Pillai published all the matter in the next issue of his magazine, 'Keralam'. He published the questions presented before the swamy. He asked the readers to judge which question was improper? He published a detailed account on the history of this Sadananda Swamy. The readers heard from Ramakrishna Pillai that all the claims of the Swamy were cooked-up stories. He was Ramanatha Menon, belonging to Chittur Taluk, Palghat Tattamangalath Pathan Veethi. In his early years he disappeared from his home and during his wanderings in Tamil Nadu, he learnt a few Tamil songs and Yogasanas. This was his only qualification. Certainly he wore an ochre loin cloth and nothing more is necessary to be worshipped in our country. If the swamy is naked, he will get more devotees.

Reading this report, none among the disciples nor swamy himself came forward to challenge. The blind devotees opened their eyes.

Last year we celebrated the birth centenary of Swadesabhimani, Ramakrishna Pillai. He edited a paper called *Swadesabhimani* and used it to fight corrupt officials. He criticised bitterly the misconduct and misdeeds of the Divan (Minister) P. Rajagopalachari and other high officials. So by the order of the King, he was deported from Travancore. His press was forfeited.

We can see now, so many Sadananda Swamys around us, but our news papers are only propagating their miracles. They are helpful in exploiting others. No one tries to do proper enquiry on these miracle stories. Paradoxically, they are now claiming the heritage of *Swadesabhimani* and pretending to be the disciples of Ramakrishna Pillai. When will they follow the ideals of *Swadesabhimani*? △

### Highlights Of February Issue.....

Victims of Fear

by Margaret Bhatt

'Have me', she said 'for I am divine!'

by P. T. Paulose

Reminiscences on a great Rationalist

by P. Parameswaran

The Story of a Nun

by V. Gopalakrishnan

besides other articles and regular features

## GODS' FOLLOWERS



# Beware of Cults

A. J. Moorthy

"Dham maroo dham....."

Mit Jaye ghum.....

Hare Krishna, Hare Ram....."

How many times your children or even you—have hummed this very popular tune! "Take a pull of the Ganja (opium). And you will reach the 7th heaven of bliss!"

That indeed is the philosophy of only one of the innumerable cults that have sprouted on our planet, thanks to the Western culture and the civilisation of our times. Different cults have been flourishing in almost all countries of the West. Anand Marg, we know too well. The moon sect, children of God, Hare Krishna, Church of Scientology, the Divine Light Mission of Maharajji, the Society of Transcendental Meditation, Peoples' Temple etc. etc.

A recent Associated Press survey has shown that the fringe religions are flourishing in West Germany, France, Britain, Holland, Denmark and Italy. Of course, most of them claim to have originated in the United States, the country where you have 'absolute freedom'.

A recent event has afforded the world to gain an insight into the mysterious deeds that usually shroud these sects.

Deep inside the jungles of South America, or to be more precise in the north western part of the small South American Republic of Guyana, was heard one evening group of hymn singing and incantations. The people writhed and wailed as though in a fit of fanaticism until they dropped to the ground-dead. They were not a heretofore unknown tribe or the primitive Indians or even hippies. All of them were American citizens, subjects of the United States, a community of 1200 people—whole families including children, who followed their God-Incarnate, a certain Jimmie Jones of Indianapolis, Indiana.

That fateful day Jones ordered for a feast and orgy, laced the drinks with a deadly cyanide poison and killed his "obedient" followers. It is stated that more than 900 "souls" were "liberated" at the orders of 'Brother Jim', either by poison or by gun shots, including 180 children.

This event has given a jolt to the conscience of the world. Even in the United States where people are generally insensitive, there is intense introspection about what it is that makes Americans follow any new fangled cult, deserting their traditional loyalties.

Though not everything is clear yet in this horror story, this latest presentation of the "American way of life" must serve as an eye opener to the world that allows in the name of freedom, mushrooming of cults that indulge in 'brainwashing', sexual abuse, fraud, visa violations and suicides.

It is reported that 150 000 persons, mostly in the age-group 14-28 are members of a dozen various sects in West Germany.

The Paris newspaper 'Le Monde' published an interview, some time back, with a 16



year old French girl who practised prostitution in Corsica to lure men into the Children of God sect.

Said she: "Our father Mr. Mose David has ordained that sexual desire may also be served for the sake of spreading the "Word".

To put in brief, it is an outrage perpetrated on civilised humans to allow the operations of these cults in the name of constitutional privileges of faith and freedom of conscience.

But it is also true that the hymn chanting buffoons are regarded by the establishment as far less dangerous than politically motivated leftist youth. This explains the fact why these sects and ashrams have huge financial resources at their disposal.

Pervert crooks are able to feign as godly creatures, and as long as social injustices persist, there is no dearth of frustrated men and women who easily fall a prey to the hypnotic spell of those self appointed representatives of "God."

Let us try to be cautious and save ourselves and our children from the evil clutches of the cults, the bye-products of the free society. △

## Baneful Babas

All these babas are crafty and funny,  
 Their only purpose is to earn more money,  
 Have all our people turned mere fools?  
 In the hands of babas became their tools,  
 Why is it that they produce only ash?  
 When our poor need food and cash,  
 How can they create things from nothing?  
 For our nation why don't they do something,  
 They steal our money, time and effort,  
 And act as God, to live in comfort,  
 It is the people who are to blame,  
 Who believe the babas and bring them fame,  
 If only the people think with reason,  
 Out of darkness they can see the sun!  
 On our fertile land the babas are the weeds,  
 To destroy them it is rationalism one needs!  
 One day I hope the truth will come out,  
 Then all these babas will cease to sprout!

... A. Murali Mukund (19-years)

HYDERABAD,

B. Sc. (Hon) III Yr. Student.

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## Mass Suicide or Mass Murder?

*D. Gopalakrishnan,*  
MADRAS

A pall of gloom struck the farm commune in Northern Guyana as 775 bodies were found strewn as a mute testimony to the tragedy of the self-styled religious leader "Rev" Jim Jones and his cult. 180 Children died in the tragedy and their bodies were found along with the adult members of the People's Temple Church.

An eye witness account to the tragedy in Jonestown, Mr. Odell Rhodes, a black school teacher, had a horrifying tale to tell. He described the fatal ceremony in the following words. "Under orders from Jim Jones, members of the People's Temple sect queued up quietly before a table in the Assembly Hall and a nurse, using syringes without needles, sprayed poison straight away into their mouths." The effect of cyanide poisoning was soon felt as the victims started twitching and yelling. During the entire death ritual armed guards surrounded the People to ensure that no one escaped. The U. S. Department of Justice was tardy in taking up investigation of complaints that some of the members had been kept in the fold forcibly and against their will. They had thought that any general investigation of the activity of a cult was isolation of religious freedom. A specious argument indeed! But then it is such non-interference Policies of our own Indian Government that have made babas and sadhus sprout all over India!

The result of the American and Guyanese governments inaction and tardiness in the matter was that Dover Air Force base was turned into one of the biggest morgues as the bodies of victims were brought to their mother country. But the question that arises

in everyone's mind is: How could Jim Jones and California based People's Temple become so influential, not only in the cults' members but with many high ranking politicians as well? Not Until Mr. Leo Ryan, the U. S. Congressman and four others were cold bloodedly murdered by Jim Jones did the world take cognizance of the heinous sect!

Who was Jim Jones? Born to a poor couple in Indiana, he formed his first church when he was only 18. He moved to northern California with his followers and later to San Francisco in 1971. His followers swelled to several thousand. He made contributions and provided campaign workers for politicians. One such political beneficiary was a former San Francisco Mayor who even made Jim Jones the chairman of the city's housing authority! Jones was visited by the California Governor and had even met the American Vice-President, Mr. Walter Mondale.

In later months before the final tragedy reputation of People's Temple began to get tarnished. There were stories of harassments and beatings. Amid mounting charges and a dwindling membership, Mr. Jones and about 1,200 of his followers moved to a jungle settlement in Guyana. The subsequent tragedy had come as a bombshell.

It is time the world learnt to be chary of cults which may look innocuous on the surface. It is a pointer to us in India where we have a plethora of religious sects. A letter from Australia, appearing elsewhere in this issue will show the agony of the friend and relatives of those who had been inveigled by such sects.

# A prayer for Riches

*Shafiqur Rahman*  
Dacca

(Enlightened thinking and hard work alone can lift one above the morass of ignorance and poverty says this correspondent from Bangladesh-Ed.)

Shah-e-barat, the night of fortune is celebrated by all Muslims, world over. The night as seen by Muslims, is very sacred as the night of salvation. The Bangladesh Government had thought it necessary to form a Chandra darshan committee to observe the moon of Saban or to get the information of observing the moon. It had been decided by Committee headed by the vice President, to perform the religious ceremony on that night with eclat. A huge amount had been sanctioned by the President to celebrate the night in a fitting manner. Even small towns will be lighted brightly.

The average Bangladeshi is a poor peasant or fisherman or the like. But the tax payers' money is thus squandered by the Government. It is in fact, the plight of the developing countries that their Governments uselessly spend huge sums of money to satisfy people's religious sentiments. Our Presidents, Ministers and Politicians never fail to attend religious functions and mouth religious slogans. Among them some in fact have little or no faith in any religion or god. And faith of some others is merely pretended. Seeing these I think Sir Julian Huxley had very aptly remarked, 'Gods will doubtless survive, sometimes under the protection of vested interests,.....or as puppets used by politicians,.....'.

When I was 8 years old, I believed in the greatness of the Shah-e-barat prayers. I had prayed for the whole night. My mother told me not to keep myself awake at night but I

## THE NO-VIRGIN:

Twenty nuns were on a pilgrimage to Lourdes when their plane crashed. They all of course, went to heaven where they were met by St. Peter and the recording angel. 'Welcome leaders', he said. 'Just a pure formality. Will all those who are Virgins take one step forward'. There was an embarrassed silence as only nineteen stepped forward.

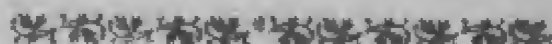
The recording angel put down his pen and turned to Peter and said, "Excuse me but what shall we do with the deaf one?"

chose not to obey her. My mother loved me dearly, so she also kept late hours by sitting beside me. When I was at my Sada for long hours, my mother thought that I was asleep; she would take me in her arms attempt to lay me on the bed. But she was destined to be disillusioned in an instant; and I would begin my prayers all over again.

Slowly it dawned on me that the alleged results of Shab-e-barat prayers were the 'concoction' of ulemas and mullahs. It was a ridiculous ritual I thought but I never mentioned this to the 'believers' because pat would come their ready answer-religious rituals seem ridiculous only to those who are unable to "experience" them.

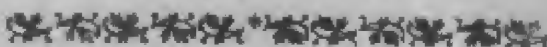
The mullahs maintain that if anybody sings the praises of Allah in this night, his income would increase for the following year and his stars would be comfortable. Submitting themselves to this belief many perform these Prayers merely to be disillusioned. How could Allah 'grant' them their wish unless they had worked for it?

So this festival, merely fans their wishful thinking and encourages idleness. But there is no let up in eating and merry-



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making. The only positive feature of this event is that the poor masses forget their woes for a night, during the festivities and celebration. But they continue to stay where they were, poor and exploited even after the most fervent prayers. The Aga Khan is the richest man in the muslim world. Does he say his shab-e-barat prayers regularly? He would rather spend the time in getting the purchase of a few more race horses or in some business venture!

We see that many such religious ceremonies are practised by the Hindu community as well. The worship of the goddess Lakshmi is one of these rituals as according to the Hindu scriptures, Lakshmi is considered to be the goddess of wealth and prosperity. There are many paupers who had clung on to such a worship of Lakshmi. But Mr. Henry Ford, an American, has become the richest man in the world without worshipping goddess Lakshmi or her equivalent (if there be one) in the Christian religion.

Similarly the worship of Saraswathi is supposed to bring 'Vidya' and knowledge. Many worshippers of Saraswathi are unlettered but then Gurudev Tagore was no zealous worshipper of Saraswathi.

Is Shab-e-barat then not a religious ceremony similar to the Lakshmi or Saraswathi?

△



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## ON IDEOLOGICAL BATTLE

*Al. Sarathkumar*

Once Bertrand Russel wrote: Do not use power to suppress opinions you think pernicious, for if you do the opinions will suppress you \*

To prove this fact, we can cite several examples from the pages of history. We are still witnessing the consequences brought about by the internal emergency.

The dunkeys orthodox mentality and clericalisms would get agitated when we rebel against the beliefs and conceptions of today. This is because, they are well aware of the fact that, if the realities are published, it would endanger their existence in those fields of exploitation in which they are engaged.

### THE STRUGGLE OF OPPOSITES:

The struggle of opposites is the basis of development. When controversial ideas collide with each other the scientific one would survive. This is a natural law of ideological battle. The righteousness or falsity of a belief does not depend upon the number of its followers. Against the Catholics' belief-against the religious belief-it was Copernicus who put forward the modern theory of heliocentric (sun at centre) solar system. The proclamation of the revolutionary discovery and such other scientific discoveries caused a lot of trouble to their discoverer. We have read about the tragic death of Bruno from history. We have heard about the last days of Galileo. Though all these incidents took place, now-a-days, no religion would dare say anything against the Copernican theory of solar system. This is because a scientific truth cannot be suppressed.

The victory in suppressing the ideas and opinions of other by material force is not a

permanent one. The intellectual and rational method of fighting against an ideology or an opinion is not by suppression. If we fight against the ideology and opinions of others by ideological means, there is no need to make suppression. In such cases, if the ideology and opinions are irrational and absurd, the rational and scientific one can master it. This is the manner of waging ideological battle. △

### Open Breasted Women

The then prevailing social custom in India did allow women of only certain castes to go about with their breasts covered. The so-called low caste women had to leave their breasts exposed to all and sundry, when they ventured out of their houses or huts. It so happened that by 1828, a number of women of 'low castes' not only became converts to Christianity but also became educated. The hoary tradition of half nakedness became naturally repugnant to them. These Christian women of Nagercoil petitioned to their gurus to intervene. The foreign missionaries caused a humble memorandum praying for the privilege of the women covering the upper portions of their bodies, to be sent to the Native Ruler. The ruler was graceful enough to concede but not fully. Only high caste women could wear a saree to cover their whole body.

The 'Low' castes were permitted to wear just a blouse when they went out. The educated women, immediately exercised their newlywon right. They went into the thoroughfares of Nagercoil as fully dressed as caste women were. This provoked the wrath of the custodians of our traditions-the archaic animal in the form of human beings. The high caste Hindus attacked these women for the sin of refusal to expose their upper half. The latter resisted and rioting was the result.

\*   \*



## CHILDREN'S CORNER

**Hindu Scriptures Retold  
No-1.**

(In commemoration of the current International Children's year, a new feature under the above caption is introduced from this month. Readers may like to send with pieces which will be of interest to youth, for publication in this feature.-Ed.)

PRAHLAD

Ms. S. D. Dasundhra

Hiranyakship: You are just crazy-where is your god?

Prahlada: Believe me daddy! He is anywhere and every where.....

H: Hey! everywhere?

P: Honestly daddy-he is every where!

H: Hi Hi Hi, can you then show 'him' in this pillar?

P: oh, sure, you see god in it.

H: But I'm not able to see it?

P: You break it-God will come out from it

H: (Kicking the pillar) now the paint has peeled off-do you consider this plastering as god?

P: Don't be on a hurry, father-you kick it again and see....

H: (Kicking the pillar more powerfully)-- now the plastering has also given way-- If you call the bricks, we now see, as god-yes, I agree there is god....

P: No daddy! You kick it again-this time you can certainly see the god.

H: If I kick it again, I'm afraid that the entire pillar may tumble and fall on you....

P: Don't be silly, father-My god is great, He will appear and kill you only

H: Let's see (kicking the pillar again with all the strength at his command) where is God?

P: (Shouting from underneath the collapsed pillar) Father please help me father! am dying under the pillar-kindly save me I am now convinced-there is no god in this pillar-God is no where-Please save me;

**Guru-Sishya**

- By V. GOPALAKRISHNAN &amp; PONNU



## Book Review

# Old Testament of Indian Atheism

by Prof. Surendra Ajanat

Bhoom Patrika Publications. Punjab  
162 pp. Rs. 10/-

"There are clear indications of the presence in India, as early as pre-Buddhist times, of teachers of pure materialism; and undoubtedly these theories have had numerous adherents in India from that period onwards to the present day..... The Lokayata allows only perception as a means of knowledge, and rejects inference. It recognizes as the sole reality the four elements, i.e. matter, and teaches that, when a body is formed by the combination of elements, the spirit also comes into existence, just like the intoxicating quality with the mixture of special materials. With the destruction of the body the spirit returns again into nothingness... The Vedas are declared to be the idle prating of knaves, characterised by the three faults of untruthfulness, internal contradiction and useless repetition." *Encyclopaedia of Religion & Ethics* Vol VIII.

However, as Prof. Ajanat points out in his preface to **OLD TESTAMENT OF INDIAN ATHEISM**, little or no effort has been made to compile the writings of those early rationalists. In 1924 Prof. A. D. Shastri Published a book of quotations along with his commentary; but for the last fifty-three

years no one followed up this initial effort with a more comprehensive anthology.

This gap Prof. Ajanat has endeavoured to fill drawing on his own considerable knowledge of Hindu scriptures. His collection of quotations from Sanskrit and Pali texts proves that rationalism is by no means alien to Indian culture, and has a long history which runs almost Parallel to Hindu orthodoxy.

Indeed it was the challenge that this agnosticism posed to Hinduism that helped purge it of some of its more dubious practices, obliging religious thinkers to defend their views and sift through the precepts they preached. And it was out of this healthy confrontation that Jainism and Buddhism emerged in which the Vedic interest in gods gave place to a more relevant concern for the principles of humanism. Buddhist texts mention 62 heretic sects which questioned the supremacy of the Vedas, and Jain scriptures list 364 "nonconformist schools."

Unlike other faiths, Indian atheism does not necessarily signify only the outright rejection of a theistic concept, but also a disbelief of the Vedas as a repository of perfect knowledge.

Since the writings of early Indian atheists were either destroyed, suppressed or distorted when quoted in order to ridicule their point of view, the process of sifting through what has come down to us involved much painstaking research. This the author has achieved with the active collaboration of his wife and fellow-rationalist Ms. Soma Sublok.

The book is divided into three main sections—an Introduction followed by Poetry from ancient texts and finally a Prose selection. In the first part, Prof. Ajanat traces the history of atheism in India and the character of early rationalism which demanded scientific proof for an understanding of all phenomenon. Understandably these,

thinkers were limited by an incomplete scientific knowledge, and the belief that there were only four elements consisting of earth, air, fire and water. But what is remarkable is that even with this simplistic derivation of nature they achieved as much as they did, so that many of their social and moral concepts have relevance even today.

The atheists of ancient India believed in Svabhava Vada which recognised that things were as their nature made them, and acknowledged the universality of causation by tracing all changes to the thing to which they belong.

There was no god, no after-life, no Karma to assign happiness or misery according to merit accumulated in some former existence. They rejected the authority of the Vedas, and vehemently attacked the priesthood with its insistence on sacrifices, rituals and the custom offering dana to Brahmins. They saw religion as an invention of devious minds to exploit the credulity of people for selfish ends.

On matters of social morality "they opposed everything traditionally regarded as virtuous and developed their own notions on truth, virtue and integrity." The test for such moral values was not based on the authority of any written scripture, but on whether they were harmful and against humanism. They therefore chose logic as opposed to loges, and applying this reasoning to social situations saw the Brahmin as equal to the Chandala, women equal to men, and good living as a positive materialism with scope for joy.

To the priestly class these beliefs appeared as the most heinous of heresies. "By Shruti we mean Veda and Smriti the Dharma

Sashtra," wrote Manu. "These two being the sources of Dharma must not be judged by adverse arguments. If a person with greater confidence in logic disregards the Vedas and Dharma Sastra, he is to be considered a disbeliever (Nastika). Even if such a person be a Brahmana he must be thrown out of society."

Predictably these "disbelievers" suffered their fair share of persecution, hanging and burning, not unlike the heretics found in other faiths, the much-vaunted Indian principles of nonviolence and toleration were not extended to them.

Early Indian atheism was a healthy materialism with its affirmation of all the good and positive things of life. Then, as now, it was "a hearty fruitful affirmation of all truth" in which positive action works towards progress and change.

In the Introduction, Prof. Ajnat also traces the historical development of modern atheism in India, with an account of the organisations which exist today along with an impressive number of publications in regional languages. And like all rationalists whose belief leads them in the hope of seeing reason triumph he says:

"Mankind has been punished long and heavily for having created its gods; nothing but pain and persecution have been man's lot since gods began. There is but one way out of this blunder. Man must break his fetters which have chained him to the gates of heaven and hell, so that he can begin to fashion out of his reawakened and illumined consciousness, a new world upon earth. Atheism in its negation of Gods is at the same time the strongest affirmation of man." △

— Ms. M. R. Bhaty.

## Test for Reason No. 16

### LOVE BIRDS

A lane has five houses in a row, each of a different colour, occupied by A, B, C, D and E (not in order). Amongst these is a Budist, a Christian, a Hindu, a Jew and a Muslim. Each of these gentlemen has a hobby and owns a pet. Only one amongst the five is a non-smoker.

1. C is a pipe smoker whereas B, who lives in the blue house loves his bidis.
2. The Budhist is fond of photography the Muslim keen on angling,
3. The Jew lives in the house on the extreme right,
4. The cat owner and the horse owner are farthest apart,
5. The farthest house from the blue house is the white one,
6. The Muslim has the Budhist and the Hindu as his immediate neighbours
7. The red house is on the extreme left.
8. E being a non-smoker particularly hates the stink of bidis that his neighbour smokes.
9. Dr. loves his dog and is fond of shikar
10. The cigar smoker likes yachting.
11. A, who lives in the green house' does not have good relations with C and E but luckily for him neither of them is his immediate neighbour.
12. The one who is fond of magic tricks owns a horse,

13. The parrot owner is not the cigarette smoker's neighbour.

Who owns the love-birds ?

### RULES :

1. The entries should be received on or before 15-1-79.
2. There is a prize of Rs. 10 in the form of books to be sent to the winner. If there are more than one correct entry the prize will be divided equally.
3. Readers are requested to quote their membership number or Subscription number.

### SOLUTION FOR TEST FOR REASON No. 15.

It is quite apparent to win equal amount in betting one has to bet a proportionate amount of that bet on Horse 1. Hence  $\frac{2}{3}$  of the amount bet on horse 1 should be bet on horse 2. Likewise  $\frac{1}{3}$ ,  $\frac{1}{4}$ , and  $\frac{1}{6}$ th of the amount should be bet on horses 3, 4 and 5 respectively.

In short the business man would have bet 1200 on Horse 1, Rs. 900 on horse 2, Rs. 400 on horse 3, Rs. 300 on Horse 4 and Rs. 200 on horse 5 to get a dividend of Rs. 3600, irrespective of whichever horse wins the race, hereby getting a net profit of Rs. 600/—

Our hearty congratulations to the following who have sent correct solutions for Test for Reason No. 15 :

1. Mr. B. K. Ghosh, Nagpur
2. Mr. G. R. Menon Ahmedabad
3. Mr. R. Narayanan. New Delhi
4. Mr. K. K. Subramaniam, Karedu

Mr. R. Narayanan, New Delhi gets the prize in the draw.

## I. R. A. Endowment Fund

We greatly acknowledge the following contributions to the fund :

1. Mr. G. S. Ranjan, Madras	— Rs.	50-50
2. Mr. K. M. Kondalah, Madras (I instalment)	— Rs.	20-00
3. Mr. N. Suseelan, Beohari (II instalment)	— Rs.	40-00
4. Mr. Y. A. Lokhandwala, Bombay	— Rs.	750-00
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As per December', 78 issue	—	2,773-65
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It is earnestly hoped that all the Rationalist sympathisers will accept the very valuable suggestion of our President, Mr. Y. A. Lokhandwala to contribute a minimum of 2% of their Annual Income for the Endowment Fund. Our special thanks are due to him for supplementing his suggestion by simultaneous implementation.

Ms. Vasundra,  
Treasurer, I. R. A.

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